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OJIBWA WORLD VIEW AND ENVIRONMENTAL ETHIC:

AN INVESTIGATIVE STUDY

by

Peter H. Woboditsch

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- American 0591
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- Canadian (English) 0352
- Canadian (French) 0355
- English 0593
- Germanic 0311
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- Clergy 0319
- History of 0320
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Theology 0469

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- Agricultural 0503
- Commerce-Business 0505
- Finance 0508
- History 0509
- Labor 0510
- Theory 0511

Folklore 0358
Geography 0366
Gerontology 0351
History
- General 0578
- Ancient 0579
- Medieval 0581
- Modern 0582
- Black 0328
- African 0331
- Asia, Australia and Oceania 0332
- Canadian 0334
- European 0335
- Latin American 0336
- Middle Eastern 0333
- United States 0337

History of Science 0585
Law 0398
Political Science
- General 0615
- International Law and Relations 0616
- Public Administration 0617

Recreation 0814
Social Work 0452
Sociology
- General 0626
- Criminology and Penology 0627
- Demography 0938
- Ethnic and Racial Studies 0631
- Individual and Family Studies 0628
- Industrial and Labor Relations 0629
- Public and Social Welfare 0630
- Social Structure and Development 0700
- Theory and Methods 0344

Transportation 0709
Urban and Regional Planning 0999
Women's Studies 0453

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- General 0473
- Agronomy 0285
- Animal Culture and Nutrition 0475
- Animal Pathology 0476
- Food Science and Technology 0359
- Forestry and Wildlife 0478
- Plant Culture 0479
- Plant Pathology 0480
- Plant Physiology 0817
- Range Management 0777
- Wood Technology 0746

Biology
- General 0306
- Anatomy 0287
- Biostatistics 0308
- Botany 0309
- Cell 0379
- Ecology 0329
- Entomology 0353
- Genetics 0369
- Limnology 0793
- Microbiology 0410
- Molecular 0307
- Neuroscience 0317
- Oceanography 0416
- Physiology 0433
- Radiation 0821
- Veterinary Science 0778
- Zoology 0472

Biophysics
- General 0786
- Medical 0760

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Geochemistry 0996
Geodesy 0370
Geology 0372
Geophysics 0373
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Paleobotany 0345
Paleoecology 0426
Paleontology 0418
Paleozoology 0985
Palynology 0427
Physical Geography 0368
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- Audiology 0300
- Chemotherapy 0992
- Dentistry 0567
- Education 0350
- Hospital Management 0769
- Human Development 0758
- Immunology 0982
- Medicine and Surgery 0564
- Mental Health 0347
- Nursing 0569
- Nutrition 0570
- Obstetrics and Gynecology 0380
- Occupational Health and Therapy 0354
- Ophthalmology 0381
- Pathology 0571
- Pharmacology 0419
- Pharmacy 0572
- Physical Therapy 0382
- Public Health 0573
- Radiology 0574
- Recreation 0575
- Speech Pathology 0460
- Toxicology 0383

Home Economics 0386

PHYSICAL SCIENCES
Pure Sciences
Chemistry
- General 0485
- Agricultural 0749
- Analytical 0486
- Biochemistry 0487
- Inorganic 0488
- Nuclear 0738
- Organic 0490
- Pharmaceutical 0491
- Physical 0494
- Polymer 0495
- Radiation 0754

Mathematics 0405
Physics
- General 0605
- Acoustics 0986
- Astronomy and Astrophysics 0606
- Atmospheric Science 0608
- Atomic 0748
- Electronics and Electricity 0607
- Elementary Particles and High Energy 0798
- Fluid and Plasma 0759
- Molecular 0609
- Nuclear 0610
- Optics 0752
- Radiation 0756
- Solid State 0611

Statistics 0463

Applied Sciences
Applied Mechanics 0346
Computer Science 0984
Engineering
- General 0537
- Aerospace 0538
- Agricultural 0539
- Automotive 0540
- Biomedical 0541
- Chemical 0542
- Civil 0543
- Electronics and Electrical 0544
- Heat and Thermodynamics 0348
- Hydraulic 0545
- Industrial 0546
- Marine 0547
- Materials Science 0794
- Mechanical 0548
- Metallurgy 0743
- Mining 0551
- Nuclear 0552
- Packaging 0549
- Petroleum 0765
- Sanitary and Municipal 0554
- System Science 0790

Geotechnology 0428
Operations Research 0796
Plastics Technology 0795
Textile Technology 0994

PSYCHOLOGY
General 0621
Behavioral 0384
Clinical 0622
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Abstract

Often throughout history, the Native North American people have been regarded as highly skilled in the ways of nature. To be more specific, these people are sometimes referred to as the first ecologists, or conservationalists. As a resident of Northern Ontario, I encountered many such presuppositions about the Ojibwa people. Is this label a result of a an apparent mystic relationship they seem to have with nature or is it a much more empirical, scientific approach?

What is it about the Ojibwa that lends itself to such an interpretation as being almost an environmental specialist? In other words, what is distinctive of the Ojibwa world view that sets up this apparent difference between Ojibwa (and other Native North Americans) and non-natives? Can the ways in which the Ojibwa view nature be beneficial as something workable for all individuals and nature? That is to say, is the Ojibwa's approach to nature something that is confined only to their world view or is it perhaps a more generalized environmental ethic, in some ways distinct from all Euro-centric environmental ethics?

This is dedicated to my parents,

whose tremendous encouragement and financial support

will always be treasured.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the entire philosophy department of Lakehead University. Without their tremendous support and love of philosophy, I might never have been introduced to the philosophical realm of the Ojibwa. In particular, I thank Dr. Douglas Rabb and Professor Mcpherson, as well as the entire class of *Native Canadian World Views* (1992). The discussions of this class provided more insight into the Native Canadian perspective than any text book could.

I thank Professor J. Anthony Blair for his patience and his help in overcoming my sometimes "alternative" style of English. The incredible amount of time and energy he put towards this project was invaluable. I thank my second and third readers, Dr. Laura Westra and Dr. Shelagh Towson, for their helpful critiques and comments of draft copies.

Table of Contents

Introduction

This thesis is a result of years of contact with Ojibwa people. I grew up in Northern Ontario and lived close to The Whitefish Lake First Nation, near Naughton, Ontario. I attended school with many Ojibwa people. The Ojibwa people I knew had a profoundly different outlook on the world than I had. In fact, they were the butt of many "Indian" jokes as a result. As is the case with many such "jokes," the origin is grounded in some difference (however insignificant) which sets these people apart from those telling the jokes. What is fundamentally different that sets the Ojibwa apart from the other non-Native people?

It was not until the spring of 1992 that I obtained some insight into the subject. I took a course called "Native Canadian World Views" at Lakehead University. The course addressed questions such as "what is an Indian?," "what does it mean to be Indian?," "how do Indian people fit into Canadian culture?," as well as the treatment of Native Canadian people.

At the same time, it became clear that such questions could not be answered strictly from a non-Native approach. Dennis McPherson and Douglas Rabb (who were

also the course instructors) state in their book, *Indian From The Inside*, that one way of getting at answers to such questions is to view the Native from a native point of view and not merely as an externalized subject of study. Rabb is a professor of philosophy at Lakehead University and wrote the book in association with Mcpherson, who studied law at the University of Ottawa. Mcpherson not only does much work with the Ojibwa people and associated legal issues in Northern Ontario, but is also himself a status Ojibwa native. Rabb and Mcpherson warn that often knowledge about the Ojibwa people comes from perspectives which

> tend to externalize Indians or Natives, leaving them to be studied as objects - studying them from the outside. But how does the aboriginal, the Indian or Native, view herself or himself and the world from the Inside?[1]

For this reason I would have liked to look at the Ojibwa world view and their view of the environment from the perspective of the Ojibwa people. Unfortunately, since the Ojibwa tradition is an oral tradition, I could not find anything substantial in this area documented by an Ojibwa scholar. My only alternative was to consult sources which I believe remain faithful to such an approach.

Since the Native tradition relied heavily on oral records, it is not as easy a task as learning about other philosophies. Consider for example the philosophy of Réné Déscartes. Learning about Cartesian philosophy involves going to the library and reading works written by Descartes himself. There are no historic Ojibwa philosophy books written by Ojibwa thinkers of the times. Therefore, I have had to follow another approach.

I decided to use as my source Thomas W. Overholt and J. Baird Callicott's book, *Clothed-In-Fur and Other Tales: An Introduction to Ojibwa World View*, a philosophical undertaking, which uses traditional Ojibwa narratives to reveal aspects of the Ojibwa world view. The two authors are both professors in the philosophy department at the University of Wisconsin at Stevens Point. Callicott is a widely recognized authority in environmental ethics. He has published several articles in the journal *Environmental Ethics*. In 1969 Callicott designed one of the first environmental ethics courses offered at any American university at the University of Wisconsin at Stevens Point. Callicott is also author of *Nature in Asian Traditions of Thought: Essays in Environmental Philosophy*, with Roger T. Ames (S.U.N.Y. Press 1985), and *In Defense of The Land Ethic: Essays in Environmental Philosophy*, (S.U.N.Y. Press, 1989). Overholt, also from the University of Wisconsin at Stevens Point, wrote articles about the Ojibwa view and use of the land, for example his article "American Indians as Natural Ecologists," appeared in *American Indian Journal* in 1979. Rabb and Mcpherson acknowledge the significant contribution Overholt and Callicott made to *Indian From The Inside*.

Overholt and Callicott use scores of Ojibwa narratives in their book. While I believe the narrative approach they use yields much insight, there are at least two limitations which ought to pointed out. The narratives themselves are representative of the Ojibwa culture. However, there is no indication as to where they each should be placed in reference to European contact. I discuss some of the possible influences European culture may have had on the Ojibwa narratives in chapter one.

However, I do not know all the effects the contact with the Europeans might have had. As Overholt and Callicott say, the narratives are constantly undergoing changes in detail. A storyteller will often make changes in the narrative as he or she tells it. However, the fundamental substance of the narratives is not affected by any such changes in detail.

> [I]t is equally certain that they [the narratives] are traditional, i.e., that there is continuity with the past. Some details are manifestly non-native, e.g., mention of guns and other iron implements, but the more abstract elements upon which our interests center seem, at least, to manifest no appreciable Western influence. For one who is not a woodland Indian, even a casual reading of them makes one aware of being taken into another world, a world in which the contour or things, their interrelations and transformations, are ordered but unfamiliar.[2]

The other limitation is in the transcriptions. How these narratives were first collected and put into print may involve some inaccuracy. I say this for two reasons. First, the Ojibwa language is very different from English, and so I suspect, as with any translation, certain misinterpretations are bound to filter through. Second, the narratives are part of an oral tradition. When they are read, it is possible that some of what the narratives are supposed to convey is in the telling of them. This would also be lost. The accuracy of this thesis will depend not only on the accuracy of Overholt and Callicott but also on the accuracy of the entire collection of narratives they use.

There are relatively few printed works in this area of philosophy. Consequently, it is possible that somebody might yet point out major flaws in the way Overholt and Callicott derive elements of an Ojibwa world view. However, to my knowledge, what they have proposed has not been challenged.

With the above limitations in mind, I believe Overholt and Callicott represent a view of the Ojibwa through narratives which, although it may not avoid Western Non-native bias altogether, at least does not seem to guided by it. They hold the view that the best way to get at this type of knowledge is not through

> the personal wisdom of an exceptional Indian sage or philosopher, but [through] the collective environmental ethos of a community. Such an ambient and possibly implicit aspect of a cultural world view is borne, as all other aspects of cognitive culture, by an ambient and communal vehicle--a culture's language. . . . Hence, the systematic study of a culture's common medium (language per se) and narrative heritage (its general fund of myths, legends, and tales) should provide a reliable and objective method for a recovery of its common beliefs. . . . [T]his method should give us a glimpse beyond the documentary horizon--to the extent that a culture's language survives and its narrative heritage lives on.[3]

Overholt and Callicott point out that the Ojibwa oral tradition of telling stories served more than one purpose. On the one hand, the narratives were viewed as entertaining. On the other hand, they were also instrumental in teaching the Native people about their own way of life.

While reading the limited works on this topic, the notion that the Native people of Canada have a philosophy entirely of their own became obvious. Furthermore, as I began reading some of the writings in this relatively new field of philosophy, it was apparent that this Native philosophy was a major contribution to philosophy itself. Discovering something about Native Canadian philosophy, in particular that of the Ojibwa, is one goal of this paper. Now I am aware that there is no way I could discover the entire philosophy of the Ojibwa (let alone that of Native Canadians) in a few short sections, or for that matter, a few books. But I believe some valuable

insights are discussed in this thesis which might serve as building blocks for further study. In particular, I will be examining the world view of the Ojibwa and whether or not that world view includes an environmental ethic.

My thesis will have two major parts. Part I will deal with the Ojibwa world view. I will be discussing the elements of a world view derived by Overholt and Callicott in *Clothed-In-Fur and Other Tales*. The eight elements they identify are based on their evaluation of scores of Ojibwa narratives. They also consulted works by over ninety different writers on the subject of Ojibwa narratives and world views to cross reference their findings for accuracy and consistency. These narratives are representative of the Ojibwa past as well as the present. In one of the compilations of narratives Overholt and Callicott use, *Legends of My People the Great Ojibway* (1965), Norval Morriseau says, "[i]n these pages will be found the beliefs, the tales and legends up to the present day, of the great Ojibway nation of Lake Nipigon and the Thunder Bay district."[4] Overholt and Callicott point out that the Ojibwa were greatly affected by the Western European contact.[5] Consequently, for the sake of continuity, they say

> We [Overholt and Callicott] have tried, accordingly, to exercise caution by selecting all our narratives from a single collection which was gathered from a relatively circumscribed geographical area.[6]

The area they refer to is the area around the North Western shores of Lake Superior, including both Northern Ontario as well as some parts of Wisconsin and Minnesota.

In Part I there will also be a brief discussion of what an Ojibwa narrative is in essence, with a few examples. I will also add an additional element that I have derived

using the same method as Overholt and Callicott. The elements described in Part one will serve in Part II as building blocks for the derivation of an environmental ethic.

Part II will begin with a brief overview of some prominent Western-based environmental ethics in order to establish criteria which identify any environmental ethic. Then, with reference to the elements of a world view introduced in Part I, I will try to derive an Ojibwa environmental ethic. This environmental approach will be examined on its own to determine if it is in fact an environmental ethic. I will use the criteria founded in Western views to see if the Ojibwa environmental ethic fits the pattern of a general environmental ethic.

The last part of Part II will deal with my claim that the Ojibwa environmental ethic is in certain important ways different from all Euro-centric environmental ethics discussed. I will proceed by comparing Western-based environmental ethics to the Ojibwa environmental ethic to illustrate its features unique to the Native approach to the environment.

There is also another motive I had in mind when I first began this investigation, although it is not philosophical in nature. A look at the history of Native treatment by non-native people reveals a paternalistic approach. This treatment is still evident today. For example, consider section 18, subsection 1 of *The Indian Act* (revised 1989), that part of the Canadian constitution devoted to the treatment of the Native peoples of Canada (referred to as "Indian" in the act):

> 18. (1) Subject to the Act, reserves are held by Her Majesty for the use and benefits of the respective bands for which they were set apart, and subject to this Act and to the terms of any treaty or surrender, the

> Governor in Council may determine whether any purpose for which lands in a reserve are used or are to be used is for the use and benefit of the band.[7]

The Indians, under the *Indian Act*, were hardly given any power whatsoever and the Ministry of Indian Affairs still holds a great deal of power over many status Indians. A status Indian is bound by the Indian Act (which would override any conflicting statements from the Canadian Constitution). Consider Section 28, subsection (1), as an example of the recurring paternal slant of the *Indian Act*.

> 28. (1) Subject to subsection (2), any deed, lease, contract, instrument, document or agreement of any kind, whether written or oral, by which a band or a member of a band purports to permit a person other than a member of that band to occupy or use a reserve or to reside or otherwise exercise any rights on a reserve is void. R.S., c. I-6, s. 28.[8]

The conditions of the Act (the Act itself being set up to deal with the Indians apart from the rest of Canadian citizens) have a definite paternalistic slant. Unfortunately, neither time nor space of this thesis would permit a third part to be added, so only a brief mention is made here, but I ask the reader to keep this third, political aspect in mind when reading the thesis.

ENDNOTES, INTRODUCTION

1. Dennis McPherson and Douglas Rabb, *Indian From The Inside: A Study in Ethno-Metaphysics*, (Thunder Bay, Ontario: Lakehead University, 1991). p.iii.

2. J. Baird Callicott, *In Defence of The Land Ethic: Essays In Environmental Philosophy*, (Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1989). p. 23.

3. Overholt and Callicott, *Clothed-In-Fur and Other Tales*, p. 213.

4. Norval Morriseau, *Legends of My People The Great Ojibway*, (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson Limited, 1965). p.1.

5. Overholt and Callicott, *Clothed-In-Fur and Other Tales*, pp.165-166.

6. Overholt and Callicott, *Clothed-In-Fur and Other Tales*, p. 22.

7. "The Indian Act", Revised September, 1989. Chapter 1-5, Section 18, subsection (1). Taken from an Appendix to *Indian From The Inside*, Dennis Mcpherson and Douglas Rabb, (Thunder Bay, Ontario: Lakehead University, 1991). Appendix V, p.149.

8. *The Indian Act*, Section 28, subsection (2), revised September 1989.

Part I:

Ojibwa World View

Chapter 1.

World View From Ojibwa Narratives

In Part I of the thesis, I will focus primarily on some of the elements of an Ojibwa world view. Prior to a discussion of the elements themselves, I want to look at why they are important and why the narratives provide a sound basis for extrapolating world view elements of the Ojibwa. I will start by looking at the working definition used by Overholt and Callicott. They define "world view" as follows:

> A world view may be understood as a set of conceptual presuppositions, both conscious and unconscious, articulate and inarticulate, shared by members of a culture.[1]

I wish to identify and focus on these conceptual presuppositions. I understand a world view to be that subset of the properties of a culture which distinguish it from any other culture. In this case, I will be looking at what sets the Ojibwa apart from Western, non-Native cultures (as opposed to what distinguishes the Ojibwa from other Native North American cultures, such as the Mohawk people, for example). What makes a culture distinct are the beliefs and other attitudes at the structural level which are presupposed by the ways the members of the culture organize their lives individually and collectively. I will use the term "world view" to denote the beliefs, customs, and

underpin a distinctive culture. The elements of the Ojibwa world view I here discuss are a subset of the Ojibwa world view.

This is a study of the framework of thought by which the Ojibwa people view and interpret the world. That is the most logical place to begin any investigation of the Ojibwa philosophy, since we must know what these beliefs or attitudes are before we can investigate how they operate in Ojibwa culture. In other words, we must be aware of what the structure looks like before we can begin to fill in the contents. Identifying several cultural categories of the Ojibwa society is the goal of the first part of this thesis.

In particular, I wish to focus on categories that are subject to change in content but not structure. The usual metaphysical implications which may accompany any world view itself will not be explored in great detail. A world view differs from a metaphysic in that a metaphysic is a systematic explanation of the nature of being and existence that is intended to be universalized or true independently of the culture. I want to focus on how the Ojibwa *perceive themselves* in the world.

The Ojibwa people, like anybody else, interpret the world by way of certain inherent beliefs or attitudes. Some of these beliefs are what Overholt and Callicott identify as elements of the Ojibwa world view. The elemental beliefs tend to have some sort of constancy to them. For instance, I will be discussing the notion of reciprocity. There are different times when different rules of reciprocity take precedence, but the idea of reciprocity integral to the world view stays the same. The way reciprocity is expressed may vary, but the principle of reciprocity remains constant.

The aspect of Ojibwa beliefs I want to focus on will be that aspect which is general and unchanging, that is, the general structure. In other words, I am not concerned with which particular situations call for which specific acts of reciprocity but rather what the general, overall notion of reciprocity entails. This does not imply that the Ojibwa culture is unchanging; for it most definitely is. Many of the narratives are from a pre-contact period (the time period prior to contact with European culture) and have permeated down through the ages relatively unchanged. Other narratives incorporate obvious post-contact innovations. For example, in the narrative *Hero*, the hunter (Hero),

> heard the sound of the splashing of water; and when over to the place he went, he saw that a bear was there. On going up to it, he got close, whereupon he shot at it with a gun.[2]

I doubt the point of this narrative would alter much if the bow and arrow was substituted for a gun. The messages of the narratives underpin the societal norms and teachings passed on from generation to generation. These teachings and norms themselves can alter as the society changes. However, particular variances do not affect the general notion. I call these notions cultural categories. In the second part of this paper I will use the cultural categories of the Ojibwa world view to derive an environmental ethic.

To illustrate my intended meaning of cultural categories, consider the Western concept of fame. If a particular world view includes this concept (and Western thought obviously does), then fame is a category used in interpreting the world. However, even if how somebody achieves fame has variances within the culture, the general structure remains the same. The properties whose possession brings fame are variable. For example, Stephen King is a famous novelist and Albert Einstein was a famous scientist.

Einstein is famous for his scientific discoveries which greatly affected the Western world. His theories were truth-based. King, on the other hand, is famous for his fictional writings. Each one emphasized different interpretations of the world. Einstein wrote about the scientific explanations of the physical world whereas King focuses on the inexplicability of it. The general notion of fame easily accommodates both people but the basis for Einstein's and King's fame are quite different. In this example, I would call fame in general a cultural category, which is unchanging in principle. Where the Ojibwa world view is concerned, it is only the general concepts I wish to focus on, not how they work in particular situations.

It is in terms of these cultural categories that people understand themselves and the world around them. The focus of this study will be some of the categories which are inherent in the Ojibwa culture. I will discuss the narrative-based approach used to illuminate some of the world view elements of the Ojibwa. Next, I will proceed with an exposition of some Ojibwa world view elements. Specifically, I will be looking at the elements of an Ojibwa world view as put forward by Overholt and Callicott, as well as an additional world view element of non-hierarchy.

Since these cultural categories constitute the basis of Ojibwa thought, it is important to be able to identify them in order to have a better understanding of how the Ojibwa view the world in terms of the cultural categories. These categories are not exhaustive of Ojibwa beliefs or categories of understanding the world. They are also not necessarily exclusive to the Ojibwa culture. The elements identified by Overholt and Callicott are but a few of the vast number of elements contained in a world view and the

elements I will be discussing are only some of the elements which make up the Ojibwa world view.

Narratives as Groundwork

In the Western European tradition, there exist volumes on what great thinkers have conveyed as their culture's world view. That does not hold true for the Ojibwa people. Ojibwa people were taught by way of narratives, usually told by the elders. While there may not be written volumes about the Ojibwa world view, there most certainly exists an oral tradition. It would seem only logical to start learning about the Ojibwa world view the way they themselves do, from their own narrative tradition.

Since the Ojibwa narratives form the basis of my study, I shall discuss them in some detail. I will start by explaining what a narrative is and then why I chose my approach to the Ojibwa world view through narratives. I will then proceed to examine some specific narratives, themes, and characters predominant in the Ojibwa narratives.

Why should a philosophical investigation begin with narratives, which themselves need not even be "true"? Ojibwa narratives are stories which usually have some kind of lesson or point. They are very similar to fables in that the participants in the narratives will often have special abilities, in the way that animals might be personified in a fable. They are more than just stories. The Ojibwa narratives were instrumental in teaching about history and morality. The Ojibwa narratives were used to pass on knowledge, but

they were also intended to be entertaining so that the audience, which was supposed to benefit from the wisdom of the narratives, would not lose interest.

One of the particular narratives examined below is titled *The Woman Who Married a Beaver*. I will refer to this particular narrative several times throughout this thesis. For this reason I have included the entire narrative in the actual text and not in an appendix. Hopefully, this tactic will ensure the reader does in fact read the narrative in its entirety before going on to the examination of Ojibwa world view based on narratives such as this one.

The other reason for including the complete narrative below is for the benefit of any one who has never read an Ojibwa narrative. It would be better yet to hear one told by an Ojibwa elder for there is a very distinct method of story telling which itself might give insight into an Ojibwa world view. I will also give some préçis of a few other narratives, using direct quotations from narrative translations. Hopefully after reading the first narrative in full, the reader will be able to understand better the brief quotations, knowing at least what a narrative is actually like.

It appears as if the narrative was transcribed from the account of a storyteller. This would explain the somewhat awkward reading in the text. Overholt and Callicott took this narrative from William Jones, *Ojibwa texts*, publications of "The American Ethnological Society."

The Woman Who Married a Beaver

> Once on a time a certain young woman went into a long fast, blackening (her face). Far off somewhere she wandered about. In course of time she

beheld a man that was standing, (and) by him was she addressed, saying: "Will you not come along with me to where I live?"

Whereupon she went along with him who was in the form of a human being. And when they got to where he dwelt, very pretty was the home of the man; every kind of thing he had in clothing and food. Very well provided for was the man. And this she was told: "Will you not become my wife? In this place will we spend our life," she was told.

And the woman said: "Perhaps sad might be my father and my mother."

"They will not be sad," she was told.

Thereupon, in truth, she freely consented to marry him, whereat the woman lost the memory of her parents. Very beautiful was the clothing given her by him to whom she was married. It was where there was a certain lake that they passed their life. A long while did she have the man for her husband. When they beheld their (first) young, four was the number of them. Never of anything was the woman in want. Of every kind of fish that was, did the man kill; besides, some small animal-kind he slew; of great abundance was their food. Outside of where they dwelt (was) also some fire-wood. And the woman herself was continually at work making flag-reed mats and bags; in very neat order was it inside of where they dwelt. Sometimes by a human being were they visited; but only roundabout out of doors would the man pass, not within would the man come. Now, the woman knew she had married a beaver.

From time to time with the person, that had come to where they were, would the children go back home; frequently, too, would the man return home with the person. And back home would they always return again. All sorts of things would they fetch, -kettles and bowls, knives, tobacco, and all the things that are used when a beaver is eaten;[3] such was what they brought. Continually were they adding to their great wealth. Very numerous were the young they had; and as often as the spring came round, then was when off went their brood two by two, one male and one female. And this they said to them: "Somewhere do you go and put up a shelter. Do you rear a numerous offspring, to the end that greater may be the number of beavers." Save only the smaller of their young would they watch over for still another year; not till the following spring would their young go away.

Now and then by a person were they visited; then they would go to where the person lived, whereupon the people would then slay the beavers, yet they really did not kill them; but back home would they come again. Now, the woman never went to where the people lived; she was forbidden by her husband. That was the time when very numerous were the beavers, and the beavers were very fond of the people; in the same way as people are when visiting one another, so were (the beavers) in their mental attitude toward the people. Even though they were slain by (the people), yet they really were not dead. They were very fond of the tobacco that was given them by the people; at times they were also given clothing by the people.

And when they were growing old, the woman was addressed by her husband saying: "Well, it is now time, therefore, for you to go back home. I too am going away to some other land. But do you remain here in my house. Eventually, as time goes on, there will arrive some people, (and) you should speak to them."

And the woman all the while continued at her work, making twine. In very beautiful order was her home. Now, once sure enough, (she saw) a man arriving there; on top of the beaver dwelling the man sat down. Thereupon he heard the sound of some creature sawing in the beaver lodge beneath, the sound of some one pounding. When the woman picked up a piece of wood, she made a tapping-noise, so that her presence might be found out by the man. And he that was seated out on top learned that some creature was down inside of the beaver-lodge. And so up he spoke, saying: "Who (are) you?"

"(It is) I," came the voice of the woman speaking. "Come, do you force an opening into this beaver-dwelling! I wish to get out," was the sound of her voice as she spoke.

Now, the man was afraid of her. "It might be a manitou," he thought. Then plainly he heard the sound of her voice saying to him: "Long ago was I taken by the beavers. I too was once a human being. Please do break into this beaver-dwelling!"

Thereupon truly then did he break into that beaver-wigwam. And when he was making a hole into it, "Be careful lest you hit me!" (she said). And when he was breaking an opening, in the man reached his hand; whereupon he found by the feel of her that she was a human being; all over did he try feeling her, -on her head; and her ears, having on numerous ear-rings, he felt. And when he had forced a wide opening, out

> came the woman; very white was her head. And beautiful was the whole mystic cloth that she had for a skirt; worked all over with beads was her cloak; and her moccasins too were very pretty; and her ear-rings she also had on; she was very handsomely arrayed.
>
> Thereupon she plainly told the story of what had happened to her while she lived with the beavers. She never ate a beaver. A long while afterwards lived the woman. There still lived after her one of her younger sisters; it was she who used to take care of her. And she was wont to say: "Never speak you ill of a beaver! Should you speak ill of (a beaver), you will not (be able to) kill one."
>
> Therefore such was what the people always did' they never spoke ill of the beavers, especially when they intended hunting them. Such was what the people truly know. If any one regards a beaver with too much contempt, speaking ill of it, one simply (will) not (be able to) kill it. Just the same as the feelings of one who is disliked, so is the feeling of the beaver. And he who never speaks ill of a beaver is very much loved by it; in the same way as people often love one another, so is one held in the mind of the beaver; particularly lucky then is one at killing beavers.[4]

The beaver narrative is typical but it is certainly not exhaustive of the possible characters and happenings, even in some of the most common narratives. In order to give a better understanding of the narratives, I will summarize some of their key points and characters.

A figure common to many Ojibwa narratives is Nanabushu. Nanabushu is neither human nor god, but a combination of both. He is a trickster and is quite a widely recognized mythological figure for other Indian tribes as well as the Ojibwa.[5] Nanabushu is at times a hero, but not in the sense that he can do no wrong. He is often portrayed as the one who disobeys instructions, who is mischievous and who is the victim. The narrative *The Death of Nanabushu's Nephew, the Wolf*, is summarized by Overholt and Callicott:

> Nanabushu dreams and instructs the wolf about actions he must take to safe-guard his life, but the latter disobeys and is killed. With the aid of the kingfisher Nanabushu finds out what happened and gets his vengeance on the killers, using the power of metamorphosis as part of his strategy. As a consequence of his action, he is pursued by a flood, but escapes.[6]

Often the Ojibwa narratives warn against the abuse of power given to individuals. The summary of the narrative *Nanabushu is Given Power By The Skunk, But Wastes It*[7], illustrates a typical scenario.

> While travelling and hungry, Nanabushu was met by the Big Skunk (skunk spirit, carrying a connotation of power) who blessed him with a flute. Nanabushu was to blow the flute and moose would come into his lodge, at which point he was given the means to destroy the lodge, killing the moose to feed his family for the winter. He was warned that abuse of the power would result in harm to his children, since he had the power to destroy only twice. On the way back to his lodge, he "tested" the power (also possibly a lesson about doubting the manitous) twice. Consequently, his children had no food for the winter. In this story, the manitou felt pity and gave Nanabushu another chance.[8]

In many narratives, various natural entities appear to the Ojibwa in different forms. For example, in *The Youth Who Was Led About by The Chief of The Sturgeons*,

> It was by the chief of the Sturgeons that the youth was accompanied on the journey here and there in every river were they with the fishes.[9]

Frequently it will happen that humans are guided by animals, such as fish, bears, and so on. Not only animals, but also other beings in nature, such as trees, rivers, and even manitous (Ojibwa for "spirits") will talk to the humans, guide them, and give them gifts.

Often these "helpers" will appear to humans in forms other than their original form. For instance, in some of the Ojibwa narratives, Thunder manitous would appear in the form of a bird--which itself might take on human form at times. Another feature of the Ojibwa narratives is that not only are humans perceived as recipients of help, gifts,

and guidance, but they also provide them. It frequently happens that humans themselves take on other forms, such as in the beaver narrative and in *The Youth Who Was Led About By the Chief Of The Sturgeons*. In these two narratives, the humans took on animal forms. Sometimes it is not even clear whether animals (or other parts of nature) take on human form or humans take on other forms.

The narratives do not feature humans exclusively as the central characters. They also focus on other inhabitants of the surrounding world, such as in the narrative titled *A Moose and His Offspring*[10]. In this particular narrative, the moose-children did not heed their parents' warnings, and as a result were killed. The narratives do not focus only on Ojibwa people or any one part of nature more than any other.

Ojibwa narratives convey the beliefs of the Ojibwa culture. They are fairly simple in structure as well as not being connected exclusively to any one particular generation, and as such, they tend to be clearer about these beliefs than would be an account of the beliefs of any individual member of the culture or of even an entire generation in the culture. Narratives are not as susceptible as individuals might be to temporary cultural trends. Narratives are, in a sense, smoothed over time, incorporating a veritable melting-pot of individuals from present time as well as past. Besides that, each narrative will highlight one particular belief or aspect of that belief of the society. In this respect, Ojibwa narratives are not very different from Western European narratives, such as Aesop's *The Tortoise and The Hare*. In this familiar fable, familiar concepts come out, such as that virtue is intrinsically better to achieve than vice, and the notions of fairness and justice are briefly explored. Obviously, such notions are

commonly found in many such tales. In fact, in many fables the whole point of the story is made clear at the end. For example, in the fable *The Tortoise and The Hare*, familiar morals come out of the tale. Aesop writes his moral after the tale: "Persistent ambition without talent breaks no record. Talent without character wins no race."[11]

There are two points worth mentioning about the comparison between Ojibwa narratives and Western fables, which are also the main reasons I choose fables as a comparison. First of all, fables most closely resemble the Ojibwa narratives in that fables also highlight a character trait held as worthy by the society. Fables, like the one discussed above, will often state explicitly the lesson to be learned. Such lessons are not so easily found in fairy tales or other Western tales.

The second point I want to draw attention to regarding the Western-based fables is that fables involve animals as the lead character. Animals play important roles in the lessons learned. However, regardless of the fable, fairy tale, or other story told by Western cultures, one thing remains the same: even though animals and sometimes other parts of nature are personified, or even when a human appears in the form of an animal in a narrative, the narrative is still from a human perspective. That is to say, animals in Western narratives appear to be humans in animal form. I have never read a Western tale where the animal takes on human form. But this does happen in Ojibwa narratives. For example, consider the narrative *The First-Born Son*, where a bird takes on the shape of a beautiful woman. And in the beaver narrative, the woman was addressed "by a man," who was her future husband, a beaver, in the form of a human man.

Another difference between Ojibwa narratives and Western tales is worth pointing out. In fables, fairy tales, and other Western stories, the lesson, whether explicit or implicit, is metaphorically relayed. For example, in *Beauty and the Beast*, I believe the treatment of the beast is meant to represent the mistreatment of any person based on external qualities. The moral cited at the end of Aesop's *The Tortoise and The Hare* is geared towards people's qualities by animal example. In Ojibwa narratives, the lesson, though often implicit, is not just by analogy alone but is also more direct on some levels. For example, in *The Woman Who Married a Beaver*, the treatment of the beavers is dealt with directly. The gifts offered to the beavers were the actual gifts offered a beaver. Similarly, the beaver was not supposed to be a portrayal of any person but a beaver. The narratives served not only to teach of the cultural aspects such as right and wrong, but also of common practices, such as proper treatment of beavers and other animals. Overholt and Callicott warn that treating the Ojibwa narratives the same as Western fairy tales would be a mistake.

> [G]iven the great differences that exist between the Western reader's reality and that in which the stories [of the Ojibwa] are embedded, there will be an almost irresistible inclination toward cultural chauvinism and an almost inevitable evaluation of them as children's "fairytales" or, worse, the childlike fantasies of superstitious adults.[12]

In Ojibwa narratives, not only will animals take on human characteristics but humans take on animal characteristics just as often. Also, the scope in Ojibwa narratives is not just limited to animals and humans. All parts of the world can take on different characteristic traits of other parts. For example, in some narratives, thunder can appear

in bird-like form, humans appear as rocks, or any other combination. My explanation for this discrepancy is the notion of non-hierarchy, discussed chapter 2.

Now that we have at least some perspective on what the Ojibwa narratives are all about, I will introduce some of the elements of the Ojibwa world view contained in them. The world view elements arise from interpreting features of Ojibwa narratives, some of which I touched on in this chapter.

Chapter 2.

Elements Of An Ojibwa World View.

I will now examine some of the elements of the Ojibwa world view that can be derived from the Ojibwa narratives. First, I will give an exposition of the elements of an Ojibwa world view identified by Overholt and Callicott. Second, I will introduce an additional element of non-hierarchy, which comes out of the discussion of the first.

The philosophical analytical standpoint of Overholt and Callicott is summarized in one of their essays which follows the narratives included in their book:

> It is obvious that these narratives do not simply convey a view of the shape of the "real" world. World views have practical implications, and include models of appropriate behaviour in such a world. A reflective reading of the narratives may enable one to formulate some ideas about Ojibwa notions of the human condition and of ethics.[13]

For Overholt and Callicott, any actual ideas about an Ojibwa human condition and an accompanying ethic might be derived from the philosophical assumptions implicit in the narratives.

Since any insight with respect to an Ojibwa world view can not come from only one particular narrative, it is necessary to combine a great number of these narratives in

order to extract common elements. The first step towards that end is look at a large body of narratives. As Overholt and Callicott state,

> the question of most interest is whether, despite whatever differences in detail may exist among versions, the underlying assumptions about reality remain the same.[14]

It is only logical that the accuracy of the interpretation increases with the frequency with which such beliefs are commonly found in the narratives. In other words, as a similarity is found in an increasing number of narratives, it lends credence to the legitimacy of that interpretation. Overholt and Callicott do not put forward a claim that they have found the world view of Ojibwa people; rather they hope to have identified some ideas worth investigating in regard to an Ojibwa world view. I propose to take the commonalities Overholt and Callicott have discovered and build on them. The cultural beliefs to look for are those that are common and recurring in many of the narratives. These beliefs will eventually point to categories of the world view.

Overholt and Callicott identify eight of these categories. They identify the elements of (1) persons, (2) power, (3) the situation of blessing, (4) metamorphosis,(5) disobedience and its consequences, (6) reciprocity, (7) life and death, and (8) the significance of dreams.[15] Although, as they point out, these eight elements are certainly not exhaustive of the Ojibwa culture, for my purposes they will be sufficient for deriving a basic understanding of Ojibwa environmental ethic as it relates to an Ojibwa world view. Note that these world view elements may not individually be very much different from those found in a Western world view. I am not claiming each element is necessarily different, but rather that the "whole," composed of those elements is different.

I will now give a brief explanation of each category.

(1) PERSONS. The Ojibwa refer to "persons" in the narratives in a much different way than Western culture does. Overholt and Callicott explain that the difference is simply extending the definition beyond human beings.

> The "person" category is, however, somewhat more inclusive in Ojibwa thought than it is in European, encompassing both human and "other-than-human" persons.... It of course follows from the fact that the category "person" is not limited to humans that what one might term "society" is cosmic in scope.[16]

For the Ojibwa, in order to satisfy the basic criterion of being a person, something simply must exist and be thought to be alive. According to the Ojibwa, persons can exist without extension, such as manitous or wind. Basically, if something is alive, it is a person. Such a person is not a human person, but rather it is an other-than-human person.

(2) POWER. In the narratives, the participants are often depicted as having special abilities or powers. Power can be something which an individual has at all times or it can only be a temporary gift from someone else. Power appears to have no constant way of operating. That is, there does not seem to be any individual who would not be capable of using power with respect to another individual. For example, power can be used by humans, animals, and plants as well as non-physical beings such as manitous. Power does not need to work in the same way every time either. It can alter something or someone but it can also take the form of knowledge. Not every being can use all kinds

of powers. Some individuals can use a certain type of power while certain others cannot. For example, Nanabushu is often portrayed as one who tries to use power which was given to somebody else. In one of *The Bungling Host* narratives, he tries to imitate the actions of an owl, but because he was not blessed with the same powers as the owl, his attempts fail miserably.

Despite the familiar overtones power takes on as far as Western culture is concerned, even secular power has a spiritual and qualitative overlap in Ojibwa thought. Perhaps the most noticeable difference comes from where the power originates--an inner, intangible essence. Overholt and Callicott point out that,

> a fundamental difference remains. This is perhaps most noticeable in the non-mechanical ways in which this power is exercised. Canoes and awls move of their own volition, animals act like humans, and all sorts of things change their outward forms in the most surprising ways. Objects and entities in the physical environment may not always be what they seem. Appearances can be deceptive, for power resides not in a tangible outward form, but rather in some intangible inner essence. One might say that in these narratives power has a certain spiritual quality.[17]

(3) THE SITUATION OF BLESSING. Power will usually flow to someone or something. The person receiving the power is said to be receiving a blessing. The blessing could be the effect of the power or even power itself. The situation of blessing will result only if the conditions or rules are kept. For example, in the narrative *The Woman Who Married a Beaver*, the woman fasted and was rewarded with a beaver-husband and the knowledge of the proper way to treat a beaver which she was able to carry back to her people.

(4) METAMORPHOSIS. The use of power will often result in some sort of change. Overholt and Callicott refer to this change as metamorphosis. Persons can take on other forms. For example, a woman can take on the form of a beaver, thunder can take on the form of birds or humans. Metamorphosis presents the endless potential for change in fundamental things in a world thought to be "constant" in Western thought. For example, Overholt and Callicott talk about how

> a manitou can undertake to fundamentally reverse a situation, so that now people will eat bears and bears will fear people, and not vice versa. . . . [O]ne finds oneself in a world in which the inner subjective dimension of experience is more fixed and permanent than the physical.[18]

(5) DISOBEDIENCE AND ITS CONSEQUENCES, (6) RECIPROCITY. A situation such as the one just described by Overholt and Callicott could come about if certain rules were not followed. This is what is meant by disobedience and its consequences. If the rules or instructions are broken or not adhered to, negative effects result. On the other hand, if these rules or instructions are adhered to, positive effects result. This is the element of reciprocity. Reciprocal relationships exist between virtually all members of the world. Quite often the reciprocal relationships can affect the "death" of some individuals. For example, if the beaver bones are not respected and treated properly after the death of a beaver, the beaver which was killed cannot return to life and in the future other beavers will not allow themselves to be killed. If the beaver bones are treated properly, then the beaver will be able to return to life and allow itself to be "killed" again, as will other beavers.

(7) LIFE AND DEATH. According to the Ojibwa narratives, death was certainly not a permanent state. Once something died, the potential was there for it to once again return to life. For example, in the beaver narrative, the beavers would come back to life if their remains were dealt with by the hunters in an appropriate fashion. The distinction between life and death in the narratives appears to be a very broad one. If an animal "dies," it might still be "alive" in the non-physical world. It can also come back to life in the physical world.

(8) DREAMS. The last element of an Ojibwa world view identified by Overholt and Callicott is that of dreams. Dreams function as a means of gaining power and, frequently, knowledge. Unlike Western views of dreams as being reflective of waking experiences, in the Ojibwa world dreams themselves are a category of experience. In addition, the dreams were considered

> "a positive factor in the operation of their [the Ojibwa] aboriginal sociocultural system" (Hallowell, 1966/1976, p. 453). Hallowell in fact considers that from the standpoint of the Ojibwa world view the boys' puberty dream fast was a "necessary institution." This is true in the first place because in the puberty dreams the very existence of other-than-human persons, so important in the individual's relationship to the surrounding world, was experientially validated.[19]

Like the narratives themselves, dreams for the Ojibwa were not merely puzzles containing metaphors to be unravelled in order discover the various truths which may be hidden within. For the Ojibwa, dreams were as revelatory as waking experience, and such things as dreamt advice had the same status as advice received in a waking state.

Physical and Non-physical Interaction and its Relationship With The World View Elements

The Ojibwa allow for complete interaction between the two components of the world. The distinction between the physical and non-physical becomes lessened insofar as they are merely descriptions of things, in much the same way as we consider colour a descriptive quality which can conceivably still change.

This holistic concept of the entire world plays an important role in the Ojibwa view of the environment. The significance of the relationship is discussed by Overholt and Callicott:

> It should be noted that the general setting for most of these tales, and thus the context in which the transformations take place, is the mythic world, the world at the time of its "origins," in which the order of things is not firmly fixed. ... Because the changes they [the characters in the narratives] bring about result in the world assuming the form in which later humans experienced it, the characters of the myths sometimes appear in the roles of transformers or heroes. And here,. . . one finds oneself in a world in which the inner subjective dimension of experience is more fixed and permanent than the physical.[20]

I believe Overholt and Callicott intend the word 'origin' as the setting up period of the way the world is now. It does not have to read as 'the beginning', only the reason the world is the way it is now, not the reason it is at all.

In this respect, the non-physical component of the world plays a significant role for change in the physical part, in that both are components of the "whole" world. Both contain within them the means for change within either component of the world, or both simultaneously (which could result in further change, or "chain reaction"). For example,

refer to the beaver narrative. Throughout the narrative, it is not always clear which part of the world the narrative is working within, the physical or the non-physical. Overholt and Callicott refer to the world where the narratives take place as the mythic. The mythic world would be instrumental in relaying the events or conditions of the world, both physical and non-physical parts. Note, however, that the changes were "real" in that they could occur in the physical, here and now, portion of the world.

Consequently, a very different world view emerges, one where there is no problem in speaking of physical and non-physical as parts of the same overall world, each being an ingredient of that "whole" world. Both the physical and the non-physical are components of the "whole" world. The significant difference here between the Ojibwa "whole" world and that of the traditional Western European thought is the interaction between the two. Following from the Ojibwas' different approach to the "whole" world, different at least from the traditional Western view of the world, is an alternative way of defining the "natural world".

In the Ojibwa narratives, the participants are sometimes animals, animals in human form, spirits, humans, and even things such as water, trees, and other natural objects. The order of the universe was not always as it is perceived now by humans in the physical world. Perhaps more importantly, there is no reason within the narratives why the physical part of the world will remain as it is now or at any other time. In fact, the events of the non-physical component of the world play an important part in the formation and continuous reformation of the physical part of the world.

The next step is to ask where the Ojibwa saw humanity fitting in this holistic, inter-related structure of their world.

An additional World View Element of Non-hierarchy

I will focus now on the connection between the physical and non-physical parts of the world and from that connection derive an additional world view element. I believe the relationship suggests a distinct view about the human position in relation to the rest of the world. Refer once again to the beaver narrative, where the treatment of beavers is the focus. According to the narrative, if the beavers are treated well and highly thought of, they will permit themselves to be used for food. If this treatment alters, they will not and the people could starve. Therefore, the people must continue to respect the beaver, even after it is used. If this is not done, a change could result, preventing humans from ever again having a beaver give itself to people. This final change would be noticed in the physical world. However, the initial change would take place in the non-physical world, thereby causing change in the physical. That in turn could result in a change of, or additional actions in the non-physical world, causing change once again in the physical world and so on.

Here, then, is further evidence from the narratives of the on-going interaction not only between the non-physical and physical worlds, but also among all of its inhabitants. To summarize, according to the Ojibwa world view, the physical and non-physical components of the world are not separate at all, but interrelated. The non-physical part

of the world can have an effect on the physical part because both are integral parts of the same, whole world. How does this interactive approach affect the inhabitants of the "entire world"? I will now examine whether the same relationship between the physical and non-physical components of the world holds true for all the inhabitants of the "entire world". Note that since the physical and non-physical components of the world were shown to actually be only parts of the same world, I will refer to that combination of physical and non-physical components as simply, "the world".

The significance of the Ojibwa world view becomes evident when one looks at the placement of people in relation to nature. To begin, a brief comparison of another world view might prove useful. European thinkers, such as John Locke (whose placement of humans in nature is discussed in greater depth in Part II), would place humans at the top of a hierarchial structure closely resembling figure 1. All of nature would be subservient to humans. From this perspective, humans think of themselves as more powerful and above nature. Modern science itself suggests that this placement of humanity is not completely consistent with the way the rest of nature functions. For example, there is presently a global emergency in regard to the environment. We as humans must act now if we are to repair and avoid any further damage to our environment. The fact underlying this global emergency is that we as biological life-

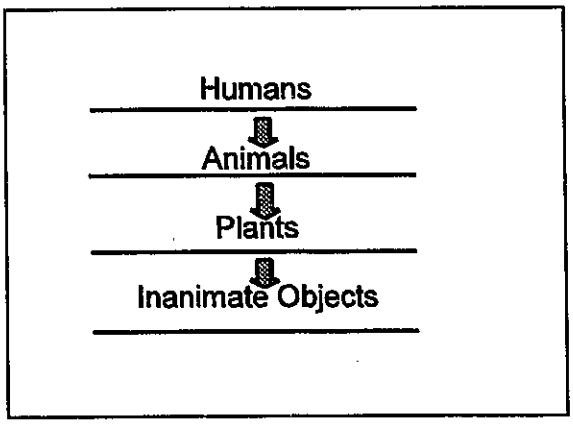

Figure 1 *Western-based perception of humans' position in the natural world.*

forms cannot function without a suitable environment. We are dependent on it for our very existence. It would seem that we cannot deny our own position in the global ecosystem as active participants and not as having a privileged position external to nature.[21] This particular point will be discussed in detail in Part II. For now, it is enough to say that the traditional Western position of humans in nature is as depicted in figure 1. There is of course some sort of relationship, but the relationship seems to be commonly perceived as a hierarchical one.

John Passmore discusses the placement of humans in relation to the rest of nature in his book *Man's Responsibility For Nature* (1974). He argues that basically two views have emerged in Western thought. Both of these seem to have religious foundations. Nature itself was not sacred and therefore any treatment involving nature would not have a religious or sacrilegious undertone.[22] Passmore questions whether animals and the rest of nature were viewed as merely conveniences for humanity, as some have interpreted the Bible as saying. Passmore says,

> although the Old Testament insists on man's dominion, it is far from suggesting that God has left the fate of animals entirely in man's hands.[23]

Passmore's position does not necessarily attack the Western view that "man is free to deal with nature as he pleases, since it exists only for his sake."[24] Indeed, the Western view of humans' place in the overall structure of the world is one of a steward, or caretaker. I don't believe Passmore would deny this, only its origin.

> Genesis, and after it the Old Testament generally, certainly tells man that he is, or has the right to be, master of the earth and all it contains. But at the same time it insists that the world was good before man was created, and that it exists to glorify God rather than to serve man.[25]

For my intentions, any problems with details in the exact relationship humans see themselves as having with nature are not important. What is important is the significance of the assumptions implicit in any such discussion. The assumption I am most interested in is that humans are distinct from and not on the same level as nature. Regardless of the origin or the depiction of humans as care-taker or despot, the fact remains that nature is something apart from humans on a hierarchical representation in Western thought.

The Ojibwa world view sees humanity as an integral, equal part of a natural cycle. Accordingly, the hierarchy found in the European world view does not exist in the Ojibwa world view. A circle would best metaphorically represent this Ojibwa non-hierarchical view, with no one party holding an exclusively controlling position. Each part of nature is interdependent with all other parts; without any preference given as to who the 'members' of the world were comprised of. We see here again the close link between the non-physical and the physical components of the world.

In the monotheistic religion of Western culture, Christianity, the expression of the conception of nature is found to have a hierarchal structure[26]. God is considered to be above the world. In fact, God is viewed as controlling everything. By definition, nothing controls God. If this relationship God has with the world can be characterized in a diagram, God would

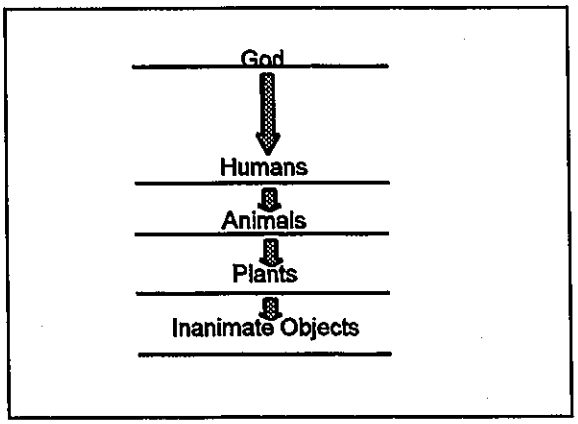

Figure 2 *God's role in a traditional Western view (Christianity) of religion.*

be seen as occupying the top of the hierarchy where the hierarchy represents the world (figure 2).

It can be said that Judaism and Christianity are the epitome of the hierarchal model that posits humans in a dominant position over nature. For example, in the story of *Noah's Ark*, one pair of each type of species was saved by humanity (Noah) from mass flooding and inevitable death. Humans here were given the responsibility of looking after and controlling nature, in this case ensuring the continuation of each species. In the Biblical story, there was no reason given for this paternalistic approach to nature. That is to say, there was no reason given why humans were chosen instead of any other species, since the animals were to be saved from destruction as well as humans. Noah was simply directed by God to build the ark and gather one pair of each species of animal on the earth.

In keeping with this view of nature, the wielding of power flows downwards. The higher up on the hierarchical scale a species is, the greater vantage point it would have. In nature itself, humans aside, there exists no natural form of justice as Western thought has for humanity. The phrase "survival of the fittest" seems to best describe non-human nature in this regard. There is no provision in nature for the well being of species lower on the hierarchal scale. Note that "power" refers to the ability of something or someone to affect another solely by its own actions. For example, a farmer has power to destroy his or her crops but the crops do not have power to destroy a farmer -- from a Western viewpoint. This represents a downward, one-way flow of power. "Authority" is

the ability and the right to wield power. When I speak of power, I refer to the authority to use it. It is this authority which depicts the hierarchical relationship.

It seems that on the hierarchical representation of nature in Western thought, authority to use power accompanies the ability. For example, even though a wild animal could kill an individual human being, according to Western thought humans in general can control animals and we see ourselves as having the authority to do so. To summarize the general Western viewpoint, the higher up on the hierarchal scale a species is, the more authority it has, and the right to exercise power, over other, "lesser" species, which are lower on the hierarchical scale. Primitive animals were lower on the scale and therefore subject to the ruling power of those beings higher up. This view of nature is also similar in some ways to a Western, European view of religion; a similar relationship as the farmer example above. In Christianity, God has supreme authority over people, humans have authority over animals, animals have authority over plants and perhaps it could be said that plants would have some advantage over inanimate objects, in that they are said to be 'alive' (figure 2). However, humans cannot exercise power toward God, nor can plants use power on animals. The same holds true with animals and people: it is a one way flow of authority. In The Bible, it says "God has given us all things richly" (I Tim. vi, 17); which seems to imply that human beings have sovereignty over the rest of nature, since nature exists in order for humans to function.

In the Ojibwa way of thinking, humans are not consistently (or permanently) any higher or lower than the rest of nature.[27] There exists no hierarchical order of authority. For comparison purposes, consider a circular representation of this non-hierarchical way of thinking, (figure 3). Any flow of power as well as the right to exercise it would not only flow in one direction, it would be multi-directional. There would be times when certain animals would have authority over humans to wield power and times when humans would have certain powers over parts of the non-physical component of the world.

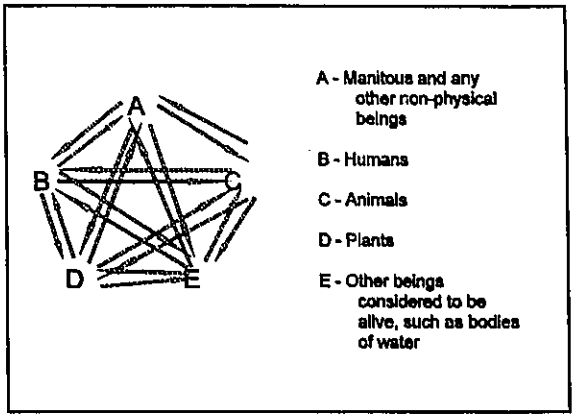

Figure 3 *An Ojibwa view of the structure of the world: non-hierarchy.*

For example, in the narrative *The Orphans and The Mashos*, two brothers were fleeing from an evil spirit. Throughout the childrens' escape, they were helped by a number of their "grandparents." These helpers were animals (for some of the grandparents it is not clear if they are animals, humans, or some other part of nature) who would use their powers to cross a mountain, cross a river, or simply protect the children from their pursuer.[28] In addition, there are other narratives which seem to indicate some responsibility in nature. I will discuss *Star of the Fisher* and *Now Great-Lynx* in Part II of this thesis when I come back to this point of responsibility flowing more than one way.

From a worm's eye perspective, the balance of power might not appear equitable (i.e. at any one time) but from a bird's eye view as all the situations of power were taken into account, the distribution of power and authority would be equal for all involved, over time. In other words, no one party could claim an exclusive right to wield power. The Ojibwa did not see themselves as having any advantageous position over any other part of nature. This is, in essence, the Ojibwa world view element of non-hierarchy.

The element of non-hierarchy is evident in the narratives in that no one person can maintain a privileged position without some sort of compromise. Also, the appropriate rules must be adhered to. For example, recall the metamorphosis example Overholt and Callicott give where the bears were made to fear humans and humans could kill the bears. If the humans do not follow the rules for killing the bears, the situation could just as easily turn around and the humans fear the bears and the bears kill humans. The same can be said for virtually every situation in Ojibwa narratives. The person holding a privileged position does so because of what they have or have not done and not because of what species they are. The privileged position, or blessing, is contingent on the recipient's obeying the conditions. Referring once again to the narrative example, *The Woman Who Married a Beaver*, humans kill beavers not because humans have an inalienable right to, but because the beavers allow it. It is also to the beavers' advantage; they receive gifts and come back to life to enjoy the gifts. Each person (including "other-than-human" persons) holds an overall equal status in the cosmic community.

A crucial point for understanding arises in that the Native Ojibwa world view does not initially appear to be very much different from the world view of the traditional

Western Europeans. There obviously are commonalities between the two views. For example, the Ojibwa are certainly not alone in their view of things such as evil, the good life, and many other apparently shared values. The notions themselves may be the same, but keep in mind that *how* these values are achieved is very different as well as how they fit into the overall world view. I will not argue that the Ojibwa world view is completely different from the Western non-Native world view but I do believe the Ojibwa world view does have some features inherent within it which simply do not exist in the Western world view. For example, humans dream in both Western thought and Ojibwa thought. However, the significance of dreams (and perhaps even the content) varies considerably between the two sets of cultural beliefs.

Even apparent commonalities must be viewed in light of how they were derived and, more importantly, what role each commonality would play in its specific culture. For example, Ojibwa children were at one time forced to attend Christian schools to be 'educated.' While the Ojibwa valued education, the exact style of learning was much different. And not only is the style of learning different, but also what the Ojibwa hold as intrinsic to their way of life, that is, their cultural beliefs. Such cultural beliefs were not recognized, let alone taught in the imposed school system. The North American schools provided spiritual training in the form of monotheistic (Christian) religious training. The Ojibwa view of spiritual training was nothing like the Christian view. Two very different world views were being combined in one society.

Clearly these are important issues, and the philosophical implications derived from the narratives could have far-reaching consequences, such as shedding some light

on the difficulties in government and sociological conflicts concerning Ojibwa in Canada. In order to understand a different culture's view about any issue, it is vital to know something about the world view of that culture, since any perspective will be rooted in that world view.

I hope that now the stage has been set to discover the associated features of an Ojibwa world. In Part II, the elements of the Ojibwa world view discussed in Part I will be used to derive an Ojibwa environmental approach. The commonalities between the Western European world view and that of the Ojibwa will be discussed in further detail, with an environmental ethic in mind. In addition, comparing viewpoints on issues such as justice, religion, and as I will do, the environment, becomes much more enlightening with at least a basic knowledge of the Ojibwa world view.

ENDNOTES, PART I

1. Thomas W. Overholt and J. Baird Callicott, *Clothed-In-Fur and Other Tales: An Introduction to an Ojibwa World View,*(New York: University Press of America, 1982). p.1.

2. Overholt and Callicott, *Clothed-In-Fur and Other Tales*, p.95.

3. This refers to the objects offered to the souls of the slain beaver. William Jones, "The Algonkian Manitou", *Journal of American Folklore*, 18:183-190. 1917, 1919. *Ojibwa Texts.* Publications of the American Ethnological Society, Vol. 7, parts. 1 and 2. Leyden and New York.

4. Taken from Overholt and Callicott, *Clothed-in-Fur and Other Tales*, pp.74-5. Taken from *Ojibwa Texts*, "The American Ethnological Society," Vol.7, part 2. Leyden and New York. pp. 251-257.

5. Overholt and Callicott, *Clothed-In-Fur and Other Tales*, p.137.

6. Overholt and Callicott, *Clothed-In-Fur and Other Tales*, p.158.

7. Overholt and Callicott, *Clothed-In-Fur and Other Tales*, p. 131 ff.

8. A Summary of narratives included in Overholt and Callicott, *Clothed-In-Fur and Other Tales.*

9. Overholt and Callicott, *Clothed-In-Fur and Other Tales*, narrative. 6., p.80.

10. Overholt and Callicott, *Clothed-In-Fur and Other Tales*, narrative 7., p.81.

11. Aesop, *Twelve of Aesop's Fables*, (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1966). p.8.

12. Overholt and Callicott, *Clothed-In-Fur and Other Tales*, p.xi.

13. Overholt and Callicott, *Clothed-In-Fur and Other Tales*, p.151.

14. Overholt and Callicott, *Clothed-In-Fur and Other Tales*, p.156.

15. Overholt and Callicott, *Clothed-In-Fur and Other Tales*, pp. 140-49.

16. Overholt and Callicott, *Clothed-In-Fur and Other Tales*, p.143.

17. Overholt and Callicott, *Clothed-in-Fur and Other Tales*, p.142.

18. Overholt and Callicott, *Clothed-In-Fur and Other Tales*, p.143.

19. Overholt and Callicott, *Clothed-In-Fur and Other Tales*, p.149.

20. Overholt and Callicott, *Clothed-In-Fur and Other Tales*, pp.142-3.

21. The environmental implications are discussed more thoroughly in part II, where an Ojibwa environmental ethic is discussed.

22. John Passmore, *Man's Responsibility For Nature*, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1974). p.11.

23. Passmore, *Man's Responsibility For Nature*, p.8.

24. Passmore, *Man's Responsibility for Nature*, p.27.

25. Passmore, *Man's Responsibility For Nature*, p.27.

26. Throughout the paper, I will be making reference to the Western European view. This view will be used in comparison to the Ojibwa for the sake of simplicity. It is the source of the predominant view of the environment in modern North America.

27. The word *consistently* is used to qualify the statement, as the Ojibwa world view does allow for inequalities but they are never permanent nor are they always necessarily to the advantage of any particular member of the community (note again that this is the "world community").

28. Overholt and Callicott, *Clothed-In-Fur And Other Tales*, "The Orphans And Mashos," pp. 33-54.

Part II:

Ojibwa World View to an Environmental Ethic

Chapter 3.

Western Non-Native View of Nature

I examine the Western approach to environmental ethics with two purposes in mind. First, I examine three different Western, non-native environmental ethics in order to derive the general features of any environmental ethic. I will extract the features which not only appear in the selected Western theories but which should be implicit in any environmental ethic. These defining properties of an environmental ethic will form the basis for testing the Ojibwa's approach to the environment to determine whether what the Ojibwa have to offer can be termed an environmental ethic.

The second reason I have for extracting the general features of an environmental ethic is to use them as the framework from which to examine the Ojibwa world view elements introduced in Part I to see if there is an Ojibwa environmental ethic. In order to talk about what an environmental ethic is, I will now proceed to discuss in general the environmental ethics of Paul Taylor, Laura Westra, and Aldo Leopold as a sample of the modern Western European view of Environmental ethics.

My intention in presenting only a brief exposition is to point out that despite important differences among these three environmental ethics, they share certain common features. These features are what make them identifiable as environmental ethics, but also some of these features are what make them clearly non-native in nature.

If in fact the Ojibwa have an environmental ethic to contribute to this area of study, it should have some fundamental features shared by other environmental ethics. An environmental ethic should have identifiable features to it that make it an environmental ethic. These features will be inherent in any ethic we call an environmental ethic, and not just in a Western environmental ethic. In order to identify these common elements, I will begin by examining some popular Western viewpoints and then extracting what is meant by "environment," as well as characteristics common to most (if not, all) environmental ethics.

Paul Taylor

Paul Taylor approaches the environment by way of what he calls a "life-centred" system (as opposed to a human-centred system) of environmental ethics. He claims:

> From the standpoint of a life-centered theory of environmental ethics,... our duties toward nature do not stem from the duties we owe to humans. Environmental ethics is not a subdivision of human ethics. Although many of the same actions that are right according to a human-centered view may also be right according to a life-centered theory, what it is that makes such actions right is in each case a totally different set of consideration. The moral principles are fundamentally separate and

> distinct. . . .[T]he two views do not always yield the same results... [W]hatever moral obligations we might have toward our fellow humans, we also have duties that are owed to wild living things in their own right.[1]

One important aspect of this passage is its emphasis on all living things. I will come back to this when I compare Western environmental ethics to the Ojibwa environmental ethic.

Perhaps the most intriguing aspect of Taylor's doctrine is his outright rejection of human superiority. Taylor says that humans deem themselves superior to all other living things based entirely on qualities said to hold merit--merit, that is, according to humans. He says that we must adopt a different belief about human relationship with nature, a relationship of equality based on respect. This bio-centric approach identifies four prominent beliefs about humans and nature. Taylor says these are:

> (a) The belief that humans are members of the Earth's Community of Life in the same sense and on the same terms in which other living things are members of that Community.
>
> (b) The belief that the human species, along with all other species, are integral elements in a system of interdependence such that the survival of each living thing, as well as its chances of faring well or poorly, is determined not only by the physical conditions of its environment but also by its relations to other living things.
>
> (c) The belief that all organisms are teleological centres of life in the sense that each is a unique individual pursuing its own good in its own way.
>
> (d) The belief that humans are not inherently superior to other living things.[2]

Taylor claims that his viewpoint denies human superiority as far as overall respect for nature is concerned. Counting one species as superior to another, he says, constitutes

"speciesism". He says that just because a member of a species happens to be born as that species, that fact does not imply anything about its merit. He claims that we judge humans as worthy of more respect and merit (and any other characteristics valuable to humans) strictly from a human point of view.

Taylor points out that a human being who might be completely without merit is still judged superior to animals by virtue of having been born into the human species. In essence, Taylor contends, being born a human no more makes one better than an animal than being born into the upper ranks of an outdated "caste system" makes one superior to those of a lower caste. We as humans reject the caste system as unjust and by analogy, we ought to do the same for human superiority over the rest of nature. What is the end result? As Taylor claims,

> No living thing will be considered inherently superior or inferior to any other, since the biocentric outlook entails species-impartiality. All are then judged to be equally deserving of moral concern and consideration.[3]

Taylor adds that species impartiality does not affect the way we ought to treat other human beings. He says that human ethics as they apply only to humans is not in the same category as species impartiality. In other words, we would not have the same obligations towards nature as we would to other human beings; how we would be required to treat the rest of nature would not affect our inter-human relations.

It should be noted that Taylor's approach is also an individualistic one. He advocates virtually a one-on-one treatment of nature. Humans are required to treat each entity in nature as worthy of respect. His theory says nothing on the treatment of an ecosystem in general, for example. The reasons he cites for his ethical treatment of

nature is of more interest for my undertaking than his actual ethic, which, as an individualistic approach can not be compared to the Ojibwa's holistic one. Taylor's theory still illustrates two important points which arise out of his approach.

The first point refers only to those organisms considered to be "alive". In essence, it could be said that being alive is a sufficient criterion for equal respect--incidentally, it is a criterion obviously proposed by those possessing that quality. If something is not alive, it cannot die either. Taylor points out that the concept of a moral agent applies only to humans. Animals can not be moral, but by that same token they can not be considered lacking in morality. Morality simply does not apply to animals and therefore it should not be a determinant of which species is regarded as superior to the others. In fact, Taylor states that only when agents are said to have inherent worth are they deserving of respect. In essence, all of "living nature" for Taylor is deserving of respect.

> The assertion that a living thing has inherent worth is here to be understood as entailing two moral judgements: (1) that the entity is deserving of moral concern and consideration, or, in other words, that it is to be regarded as a moral subject, and (2) that all moral agents have a prima facie duty to promote or preserve the entity's good as an end in itself and for the sake of the entity whose good it is.[4]

The second point is that the obligations to nature Taylor refers to are separate from those owed humans. He asks what ought to be done when human moral interests conflict with the life-centred environmental ethic.

> [H]ow are our obligations and responsibilities toward the natural world (supposing we have them) to be weighed against human values and interests? Do the duties of environmental ethics ever require us to act in

> ways that may be contrary to human ends, and if so, when (if ever) do those duties override the fulfilment of human ends?[5]

The actual question itself is not my concern but rather what it presupposes: a very clear distinction between nature and humans, two separate domains and each one having a distinct ethic. Even though Taylor claims his theory precludes a separation of humans and nature, it seems Taylor is still talking about one. Humans still appear to be the stewards, because they have obligations to nature and nature has no obligations to them. That stewardship seems to indicate some sort of hierarchy is still operating in Taylor's approach.

For Taylor, then, the biocentric approach would see humans adopting an all-encompassing attitude and respect towards all living things. According to Taylor, living things would include plants, animals, and even "life communities". Presumably non-living things such as rocks would be exempt as well as anything non-physical.

The treatment of these living organisms requires regarding each as having a good of its own. Each also must be regarded as having inherent worth. This attitude towards nature is not a human-based attitude but it is something humans must adopt. The attitude only involves human treatment of nature; it works one way only, with no obligation on the part of non-human nature.

Laura Westra

Westra's approach is a very recent development in the environmental literature, which deals not only with the environment but also the position of the human species within this environment. In her book, *An Environmental Proposal For Ethics: The Principle of Integrity*[6], Westra defends a holistic view of the environment. She also points out that any theory whatsoever must take the physical realities of our existence into consideration.

> The first moral principle is that nothing can be moral that is in conflict with the physical realities of our existence, or cannot be seen to fit within the natural laws of our environment.[7]

The reason is simply because, according to Westra's theory, we as human beings cannot divorce ourselves from our environment. We are necessarily connected with and part of the entire planet's ecosystem. What happens to the natural world will affect humanity. Westra holds "life support systems and hence, wholes, to be primary."[8] Westra expresses her "interconnectedness" with nature by way of a "figure of eight" representation. According to her,

> the "figure eight" has the following notable characteristics: it does not ultimately lead anywhere, except back to the beginning; it does not "culminate" in either harmony or stability, and its paths are not entirely predictable.[9]

According to the principle, integrity will exist when, in the absence of human intervention, ecosystems have the greatest potential for regeneration, dependent only on

that ecosystems spatial and temporal location. This will also present the possibility for the greatest bio-diversity.[10]

Westra claims that ethical obligations arise from this notion of Integrity. She argues that ecosystem health alone is not a sufficient end, since merely healthy ecosystems may also incorporate undesirable possibilities, limiting their capacity. The ecosystem must be able to deal with stress, and all ecosystems can deal, in their own time, with what Westra terms "natural" stress--stress that occurs as a result of natural events (e.g., lightening-caused forest fires). What is hazardous to life-support systems is not natural stress, but anthropogenic stress--the stresses caused by human intervention (e.g., cloro-fluoro-carbon damage to the ozone layer). An otherwise healthy ecosystem alone might not be able to deal with anthropogenic stress. It is for this reason that Westra says health by itself is not sufficient.

> The system will posses integrity, if it retains the ability to continue its ongoing change and development, unconstrained by human interruptions past or present.[11]

Integrity possesses two aspects, function and structure, both of which are integral to the existence of the world. In fact, she suggests the necessity of a certain amount of pristine wilderness where there is absolutely no human intervention (beyond, as she says, going in "naked"). This area would be surrounded by a "buffer zone," intended to protect the pristine area. In the buffer zones, there would be restrictions placed on the amount of human activity permitted in these areas. The buffer zones would be for the preservation of the pristine areas. The pristine areas would be said to

have integrity, and the buffer zones to have health. The two are interdependent with the rest of the world then depending on them.

Consequently, as Westra points out, the Principle of Integrity is not intended to act as a basic principle for all other inter-human ethics but as a limit on these. However, as Westra points out,

> The "principle of integrity" . . . does not propose a morality aimed at interpersonal relations, whether intraspecific (that is, among humans), or interspecific (that is, between humans and individuals of other, non-human, species).[12]

It would seem that while The Principle of Integrity is in fact a holistic one insofar as humans' relationship with nature is concerned, it is not intended to extend to non-humans, nor between humans. In other words, the principle does not obligate nature to act in any way towards humanity; the principle does not allow for this kind of ought in nature. I will address this issue later on in this chapter, but first I want to look at another holistic approach to environmental ethic.

Aldo Leopold

According to Aldo Leopold,

> ...a land ethic changes the role of Homo sapiens from conqueror of the land-community to plain member and citizen of it. It implies respect for his fellow-members, and also respect for the community as such.[13]

Leopold's "Land Ethic" emphasizes respect for the symbiotic community regardless of its apparent worth or value. He points out that his Land Ethic is the result of an

historical perspective on human actions. Leopold argues that humans' role as conquerors has been shown to be self-defeating. He uses an historical approach to look at the inevitable breakdown which he says will occur whenever human beings view themselves as conquerors. That state is simply not a stable one.

He says that nature is a biotic (or symbiotic) relationship between people and the land. Leopold says:

> An ethic, ecologically, is a limitation on freedom of action in the struggle for existence. An ethic, philosophically, is a differentiation of social from anti-social conduct. These are two definitions of one thing. The thing has its origin in the tendency of interdependent individuals or groups to evolve modes of co-operation. The ecologists call this symbiosis.[14]

He talks about humans being members of a greater community. Leopold refers to the natural environment as more than just the conditions of life. He says we are to look at

> [the enlarged boundaries] of the community to include soils, waters, plants, and animals, or collectively: the land.[15]

Any action taken with respect to the land ought to take into consideration the land as a complete entity and not just as a collection of parts. Leopold refers to the "integrity" of the land and maintains that even though certain aspects of the land may be perceived as "useless,"

> if (as I [Leopold] believe) the biotic community's stability depends on its integrity, [these members of that community] are entitled to continuance.[16]

The land is a biotic mechanism and we ought to have respect for all fellow members of that community. Issues regarding nature should be resolved with this in mind and not based solely on expedience or economic considerations. The members of the

community are not just those considered "alive," but rather Leopold includes *any* member whatsoever. These members would include rocks, rivers, and soils as well as all animate objects.

Callicott has said that Leopold's *Land Ethic* is very similar to the environmental approach of the Ojibwa. This claim will be discussed later on, but it is easy to see the basis for Callicott's claim. Leopold's *Land Ethic* classifies all of nature together, regardless of worth, value, or even life. He refers to the integrity of the biotic community and our obligation to uphold it.

The concept is certainly not exclusive to Leopold any more. However, we see the obligations placed only on humanity towards nature in a one-way relationship, nature appears to be free from similar obligations towards humans. I will come back to this relationship when I compare the Ojibwa environmental ethic with those of Western thought.

Common elements in Western environmental ethics

A general conception of the Western view of an environmental ethic can be extracted from these three authors. There appear to be at least three distinct, common components to any such ethic. In a very general sense, these are:

1) some belief or presupposition of what nature or the environment consists of;

2) an identification of the role or position humans occupy within nature;

3) an acknowledgement of particular moral obligations and moral permissions with respect to nature.

1) A general belief about what nature consists of in Western, non-native thought

As a generalization of a Western European approach to the environment, is the environment or nature something from which humans are separate? In other words, is nature thought of as something which humans are a part of completely or are human actions and even their placement thought of as clearly distinct from the rest of nature? It appears that in Western environmental ethical theories the latter is in fact the case, with the possible exception of Leopold. Callicott says:

> My own view is that it is basic to human nature to both consume and modify the natural environment.[17]

Obviously, consumption of things in nature is vital for human (and other inhabitants') survival. How it is to be properly accomplished will be outlined in the environmental ethical theory. Consumption considered by itself has no ethical implications, but the attitude and methods surrounding consumption and the use of things in nature presently found in any society, imply that society's tacit environmental ethic.

Also, the term "modify" in the expression "modify nature" will contain different presuppositions, depending on the cultural context. For example, we are modifying nature by cutting down a tree, but also by erecting a skyscraper. I believe that the

term "modify" in Western, non-native thought implies changing nature to suit human desires.

In its broadest sense, "environment" is sometimes referred to as the "conditions or circumstances of life".[18] For my purposes, a more philosophical definition is required. According to Henry David Thoreau, Homo sapiens and nature have an organic connection. He says that the connection is with "a natural world from which the species had come and to which it was bound."[19] I doubt that there would be any dispute as to whether or not Western thought sees nature and humans as connected. However, I do want to establish a very basic notion as to the conditions of that connection. Max Oelschlaeger points out in *The Idea of Wilderness* a modern trend in the perception of nature.

> The idea of nature as the source of human existence, rather than a mere re-source to fuel the economy, is the outcome of the second scientific revolution, initiated in the nineteenth century by Charles Darwin and Rudolf Clausius.[20]

Nature then can be seen as a necessary condition of human existence. It is this notion of the condition itself in particular which is of greatest interest in environmental ethics. Even though there might be other views of nature, this holistic one seems to be the most accurate depiction.

I will use Leopold's definition of the land throughout this paper for a most general summarization of the Western, non-native approach as to what the environment consists of:

> [the enlarged boundaries] of the [human] community to include soils, waters, plants, and animals, or collectively: the land.[21]

To grasp the notion of a Western, non-native approach to the environment, more than just the boundaries themselves must be examined. In particular, we need to know how humans are placed in relation to the environment. It would appear that the notions of the environment and of humans' place in that environment are very closely linked. Therefore, I will deal with these two aspects of an environmental ethic together, to help clarify each of them. Then I will look at the accompanying obligations.

One notion of the environment, at least in a traditional Western European context, suggests a surrounding in which human beings function. It is a surrounding, it should be noted, which is considered one in which humans do not view themselves as on the same plateau as the rest of nature. Regardless of the necessary connection to nature, such as Oelschlaeger suggest, the fact remains that human separation is still apparent. He says,

> The idea of nature-as-an-organism lets us view ourselves as part of an evolving cosmos, "manifestations of a complex universe; we are not apart, but are moments in the open-ended, novelty-producing evolution." The idea of nature-as-a-machine lets us view ourselves as standing apart from the environment and as exercising control over it.[22]

The view of nature-as-a-machine obviously exhibits a separation of humans and nature. But what about the view of nature-as-an-organism, for example, Westra's Principle of Integrity which uses the ecosystems approach? I will discuss this and other general Western approaches to nature further on when I compare them to the Ojibwa approach to the environment.

Holistic environmental ethics, such as those of Westra and Leopold, are not human centred and do not assign to humans any authority to use or control nature for their

own benefit. However, it remains my impression that humans are viewed even in these theories as having distinctive properties which set them apart from the rest of nature at the same time that the theories place these distinctive creatures in a holistic relationship with nature.

When it comes to a non-holistic theorist like Taylor, the distinctiveness of humans is quite explicit. To be sure, Taylor talks about species-impartiality, but he advocates a different role for humans than for non-human things. All living things have the same merit, for Taylor, but as humans we also have the property of rationality which gives us the responsibility to look after other species.

Environmental ethics are a phenomenon of the last half of the twentieth century. If one looks back at classical liberal theories for the attitudes to the environment that their doctrines reveal, a clearly anthropocentric hierarchical viewpoint emerges (figure 4). In such theories, the environment appears as something external to humans, in a hierarchical set-up. It is perceived as a storehouse for resources for human use.

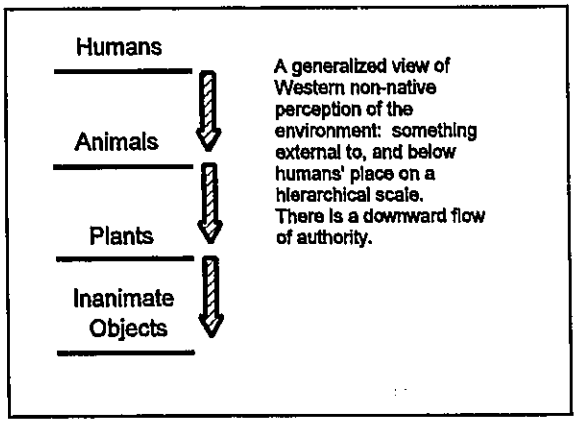

Figure 4 *Western hierarchy in nature.*

For example, John Locke (1588-1704) who strongly influenced the American constitution and later thought in general, wrote in a passage on private property:

> God, who hath given the world to men in common, hath also given them reason to make use of it... The earth and all that is therein is given to men for the support and comfort of their being. And though all the fruits it naturally produces... belong to mankind in common...Though the earth and all inferior creatures be common to all men,... the labor of his body and the work of his hands we may say are property of his. Whatsoever, then, he removes out of the state of nature hath provided and left it in, he hath mixed his labor with, and joined to it something that is his own, and thereby makes it his property.[23]

Clearly the position here is that all of nature is available to humans for the taking. Even the requirement placed on human beings that we must make use of that part of nature we claim as our property doesn't change the "storehouse" attitude prevalent in Locke. In the above passage Locke was not proposing an environmental ethic but a theory of property as part of his theory of government. However, a theory of property still has to presuppose some approach to the environment. Since the citizens presumably are not floating in space, there is some relationship with the land. Locke has exemplified what I call the common Western, non-native view to the environment. The restrictions Locke places on the original State of Nature are meant to accommodate other people and are not there for the sake of nature. According to Locke, individual ownership is possible, with the landowner also owning all things that come with the land. Regardless of how land ownership is decided or even used, the point here is that land ownership is possible and indeed seen as a natural right.

Thomas Jefferson argues along a line similar to Locke's. Jefferson states:

> each individual of the society may appropriate to himself such lands as he finds vacant, and occupancy will give him title.[24]

Once again we see the underlying assumption of the possibility of land ownership. Land is perceived as something *held* by humans; something over which humans have control and exercise authority. Refer once again to the representation of the hierarchy of humans and nature as depicted by the traditional Western European vantage point. Let me repeat that my emphasis is on the ideas supporting Western environmental ethics and not any inherent problems or merits of any one particular theory. I am noting their features and not criticizing them. The notion of land-ownership points to the human-nature relationship Western non-native seems to advocate.

2) The human position in nature according to Western thought

So far, I have examined a view of nature in Western thought, but I have not yet examined the placement of humans in nature. Now we have at least a general Western view of nature beginning to emerge (while noting the possible exception of Leopold's and Westra's views). Land and all of nature were considered property in the Western, non-native tradition. More specifically, nature as such was subject to ownership. This perception of nature is something which is still accepted by many Western, non-native thinkers. For example, in *Takings, Just Compensation, and the Environment*, Mark Sagoff compares two prominent thinkers in this area; Ellen Frankel Paul and Richard Epstein. Sagoff acknowledges the concept of property ownership as it is found in both Epstein's and Paul's writings.

> Ellen Paul's *Property Rights and Eminent Domain* and Richard Epstein's *Takings* endorse a theory of natural property rights, at the heart of which is the principle that people may use their property as they see fit as long as they respect the same rights and liberties of others.[25]

The notion of property rights is concerned with human rights regarding property. The idea of natural property rights maintains that people have the right to own land, provided their ownership or their use of the land does not infringe on the rights of others. In fact, all aspects of the land are included with the land ownership. Anything which might accompany the land (as part of it) is included with the property rights. For example, animals, plants, "resources," or any other components of nature which happen to be on the land are considered owned by whomever owns the land. People may still have obligations pertaining to their property and the use of it, but ownership of nature is nonetheless evident.

A further look at Locke's view on property is useful here to view accurately one influential Western, non-native environmental approach. An amendment to Locke's view of nature would acknowledge animals as having a different, higher, status than the land itself. One way to view this would involve seeing the animals as having a higher status of hierarchy and consequently more authority than the land itself. Animals would be subject to different limitations of human ownership than the land. The resulting view would be one in which animals have intrinsic rights, at least more than the land. In effect, animals would be granted at least some rights. They would hold a position higher than the rest of nature on a hierarchical scale. Treatment of animals in keeping with their rights becomes important, particularly with respect to the

rationale behind the efforts to distinguish animals from the rest of nature, as Peter Singer does in *Animal Liberation*, (1973)[26]. The desired end for Singer is not just one of appropriate treatment but also of appropriate attitude motivating the treatment. The fact still remains that, in the Western view, nature is at least in some respect, profoundly segregated from humans.

An excellent illustration of this point is the notion of natural property rights. Sagoff's views are an example of implicit assumptions regarding property. Sagoff is concerned with justice as it applies to our relation to the land. Whether or not what he says is in fact an environmental ethic is not as important for my purposes as the inherent attitude towards nature it exhibits. In order to ensure that the rights and liberties of others are upheld, Sagoff says, regulations should be in effect to prevent the destruction of the land. This, he would say, represents justice. He writes;

> Courts should uphold environmental regulations, such as the Wisconsin ordinance, that prevent landowners from destroying natural resources the public has long enjoyed and in which it has a legitimate interest. The incidents of property include the rights to use, exclude, and transfer, but not the right to destroy. Destruction of resources that implicitly belong to the common, then, constitute a "noxious" use, which is not protected by the Constitution.[27]

Sagoff's approach brings up a very interesting point. If land owners can "use" the land, transfer it, and exclude others from its use, but cannot destroy it, do they in fact own it completely? Obviously, the sort of ownership Sagoff intends is not complete in that the land-owner would not *own* the land independently of the government. The land-owner would really own exclusively certain rights and privileges that apply to that land, but the government could be said to own the land.

The point I want to illustrate here is that land ownership is an accepted concept in Western, non-native views of land. Regardless of any incumbent responsibilities to the land itself or even the occupants on that land, human ownership is possible. The second point about Sagoff's theory I want to point out is that a hierarchical order of responsibility still exists. Any duties owed to the land are to be upheld and enforced by human beings. For whatever reason, nature is "taken care of" by humans. This still seems to posit human beings at the apex of the hierarchical representation. Also, once again we see the one-way flow of responsibility that appears to characterize Western environmental thought.

While Sagoff attempts to approach the property rights and required obligations or duties within the confines of the law, his is still a view of nature fundamentally separate from a view of humans. Any theory whatsoever that refers to natural (or any other) land and other property rights has as its foundation one very important presupposition: one can *own* land, or other aspects of nature. Even if one places limitations on ownership (as Sagoff does, for example) that still allows inherent permissive rights of ownership, such as exclusion and transfer. It is understood that in order for somebody to transfer land, somebody must be permitted to own land. Land is clearly regarded as a possession. Any limitations are placed upon the supposition already in place. It is this presupposition of ownership I am focusing on as a characteristic of Western environmental ethics.

The presupposition of ownership is clearly to be taken in the most basic sense. In other words, it relies on the notion that land ownership is a concept which makes sense

in Western, non-native thought. This is obviously the case, since any subsequent theory of property is built on the possibility and acceptability of land ownership. What I wish to draw attention to is not *who* ought to own land or what rights *any* person or party has, but the concept of ownership itself. In other words, *somebody* can own land.

It is now clear that what *the environment* means within the scope of the Western world view is much more complicated than a simple dictionary definition. The environment, for our purposes, contains certain prescriptions with regard to human position only and human treatment of other, non-human facets of the environment. That is to say, when we refer to the environment, we do so with certain attitudes about it already in place.

Our concept of the environment also means more than merely our surroundings or conditions of life, it also connotes our attitudes and beliefs regarding nature and where we as humans see our position in relation to nature and consequently, obligations to the environment which would accompany that position. Any obligations we have toward nature are going to be the active part of our position within nature. Obligations and duties towards nature are entailed by our position in nature.

3) Western-based obligations and duties towards nature

The third feature of any environmental ethic deals with the actual ethical obligations, both prohibitions and permissions. The theory's conception of the human role in nature will determine in part what these ethical actions will consist of. For example, in his theory Leopold talks in general about what is ethically right and wrong:

> [a] thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability, and beauty of the biotic community. It is wrong when it tends otherwise.[28]

Any environmental ethic must have some sort of concept of what is right and wrong. Until there are some sort of guidelines as to what is obligatory, permitted, and prohibited, no ethic is in place. It is this feature that will compose my third and final criterion for an environmental ethic in general. All the theories examined so far seem to have at least the three features I believe are necessary for an environmental ethic.

With an understanding in place as to what nature is believed to consist of, I can now briefly examine human obligations or duties. Regardless of whatever concept of nature is understood in an environmental ethic, any such theory will imply some role or position for humans in relation to nature,or the rest of nature, if it already identifies humans with nature. This role is very closely linked to beliefs about nature, insofar as humans must fit into that scheme somehow. One way or another, humans are accordingly related to nature. Our conception of the natural environment and of our

relations with it will clearly have implications for what we regard as appropriate conduct affecting it.

In the Western, non-native view of the environment, ownership of nature is permitted. Ownership of not only land, but of animals, plants, resources, and even bodies of water is part of this world view. Ethical implications are therefore going to follow from this idea of ownership. Consequently, any ethic will have different requirements for people, who cannot be owned, from those it would have for anything which was subject to ownership. Other humans cannot be considered property and are granted equal rights to any other human. Things that are owned, such as pets, on the other hand, by definition, cannot have the same rights as their owners. If they did, then the objects as such would not be subject to ownership and could not be considered property.

My intention in discussing this third component of an environmental ethic is to illustrate two points. The first is that duties and obligations toward nature are inseparable from the perceived human position within nature. The second point focuses on the actual obligations towards nature in Western, non-native thought. I do not need to go into any detail about the particulars of Western, non-native environmental obligations. What I do want to point out is that because of the hierarchical separation of humans and the rest of nature, the obligations (whatever they might be; and this could vary among different theories) are going to have an owner-owned approach as their foundation. Whether the owner is an individual or group, the

point is that nature is subject to human ownership. The basic foundation is what I will be referring back to in comparing the Ojibwa foundation of environmental duties.

Summary

To summarize then, for any environmental ethic to be an ethic it should contain at least the following three components:

1) some belief or presupposition of what nature or the environment consists of;

2) Identification of the role or position humans occupy within nature;

3) Acknowledgement of particular moral obligations and moral permissions with respect to nature.

I will be using these features during the derivation of the Ojibwa environmental ethic. I will examine the Ojibwa approach to the environment to see if it contains the three elements necessary to classify it as environmental ethic.

The above three criteria found common in Western environmental thought are not limited to Western thought, but they are necessary for any theory to be called an "environmental ethic". For example, if we substitute another view of nature different from Western thought, it is easy to see how a completely different environmental ethic could emerge, even though the features will themselves not change. I will be doing just this with the Ojibwa world view: substituting it into the "formula" to see a) whether or not it is an environmental ethic, and b) how a different world view will lead to a different environmental ethic. In addition to testing Ojibwa environmental thought against the general criteria, I will also use the features as a vessel of comparison between the Ojibwa environmental ethic and those of the Western, non-native environmental ethics discussed earlier in this chapter.

Chapter 4.

The Concept of "Environment" As Derived From an Ojibwa World View Perspective.

I will start by discussing the Ojibwa perception of nature, or the environment derived from the elements of a world view discussed in Part I. From there, I will look at human placement within that environment, followed by a general discussion of ethical duties which accompany the human position. Only then can a comparison be made to Western, non-native environmental ethics.

The derivation itself will focus primarily on the nine elements of a world view discussed in Part I. These elements are: (1) persons, (2) power, (3) metamorphosis, (4) the situation of blessing, (5) disobedience and its consequences, (6) reciprocity, (7) life and death, (8) the significance of dreams, and (9) non-hierarchy. I will be discussing these nine elements as a group, looking at them in conjunction with each other as well as the inter-relationship between the physical and non-physical components of the world.

1) Ojibwa Understanding of "Environment"

The largest and most significant of the three is the Ojibwa interpretation of the environment. I will begin here because any duty or obligation of right and wrong will be contingent on the human position in the environment. The human placement or role in the environment is directly connected to the perception of that environment.

The Ojibwa understand the world as one entire community comprised of many members from all aspects of existence. What is important in Ojibwa thought is the notion of community. The term "persons" incorporates all of nature for the Ojibwa. To be clear, "nature" refers to the entire world, including any and all living members. The Ojibwa concept of person by itself has incredible implications for the Ojibwa environmental ethic. Each and every living part of nature (which, incidentally would also include both the physical as well as the non-physical parts of the world in the entire nature) is considered "a citizen" of the community. I use the term citizen to point out two features: 1) all aspects of nature are active, equal members capable of effecting change and 2) nature entire can be viewed as the community, moreover, it can be considered only one community.

I want to point out that the communal interaction between the "persons" is not just limited to the physical part of the world. The physical part of the world exists in conjunction with the non-physical part. It is not surprising, therefore, to find some of the same concepts used in the non-physical part of the world applied to the physical

part of the world. In fact, as Callicott argues, dreams are a vessel of communication between the two parts of the world.

> Dreams and waking experiences are sharply discriminated, but the theatre of action disclosed in dreams and visions is continuous with and often the same as the ordinary world. In contrast to the psychologized contemporary Western view in which dreams are images of sorts existing only "in the mind," the American Indian while dreaming experiences reality....[29]

One of the most obvious similarities between the physical and non-physical parts of the world is the large scope of "persons". It is apparent that for the Ojibwa, "person" means any member of the community. A member is simply any part of the community, which is in fact the entire world.

It appears that the main (if not, the only) requirement for being a person was to "live" in the community. The community incorporates aspects of both physical and non-physical parts of the world. In other words, "citizen" was not to be limited at all, since the term "community," when used in conjunction with the Ojibwa, was in no way limited to either physical or non-physical but rather incorporated aspects from both. In fact, the term "citizen" was not even limited to what Western, non-native thought refers to as nature. The community was collectively involved in the balance of powers. Membership then is not really a choice at all. Any interaction with the world would constitute membership in that world community. Remember that for the Ojibwa, manitous and water had the potential for interaction and would therefore qualify for membership. Presumably then, all members would contribute to this constant balance. For the Ojibwa, all of nature is inter-related and inter-dependant. The Ojibwa belief of

the environment is, in essence, all inclusive with no distinction between physical and non-physical.

2) Ojibwa Placement of Humans In Nature

Coupled with the Ojibwa's perception of the environment is the position humans occupy within that environment. It logically follows from the definition of community that each and every citizen of it is capable of interacting with all other citizens. Like any community, its citizens are obliged to observe certain rules, whether they are laws or protocols. This metaphor is a useful depiction of the Ojibwa's position in relation to nature and I will come back to it later on. For now, I just want to make the idea of "citizen" clear, as I will be referring to it throughout this chapter.

The interaction between the physical and non-physical parts of the world is a balanced relationship, since according to the Ojibwa world view, no one member of the entire world is necessarily supposed to have higher permanent status than another, and that would include members of both the physical and non-physical aspects of the world. What then governs the interactions? Some of the recurring themes Overholt and Callicott have identified from Ojibwa narratives can provide some insight here. In particular, the concepts of metamorphosis, life and death, reciprocity, and power[30] will prove useful in illuminating the interactions between citizens of both physical and non-physical parts of the community.

The notion of metamorphosis outlines an important pre-supposition about the environment for the Ojibwa. Metamorphosis is one way in which power could manifest itself. The non-physical and physical part of the world are interrelated and occurrences in the non-physical part of the world also occur in the physical part. The non-physical part of the world is considered to be that in which

> the order of things is not yet firmly fixed.... The changes they [the characters of the narratives] bring about result in the world assuming the form in which later humans experience it.... One finds oneself in a world in which the inner subjective dimension of experience is more fixed and permanent than the physical.[31]

In the non-physical part of the world the physical limitations placed on the concept of time do not exist. Time is thought to be subjective and not experienced identically by all. For example, in the narratives, it often occurred that while one "person" experienced several days passing, another experienced virtually no time at all. The narratives suggest a similar non-permanence of the current state of affairs in the world.

Nothing in the world according to the Ojibwa is necessarily permanent. Everything is held in a delicate state of balance and held there only by total community cooperation. The community, it will be recalled, is nature entire. Metamorphosis meant not only a possible change in the world, but also in individuals. For example, in many narratives, animals would take the form of humans, and humans would take other forms of nature. The result of their actions could affect both individual and community relationships.[32] The significance of metamorphosis is that everything in the Ojibwa community was subject to change. More importantly, the change would not be arbitrary or random, but a direct result of some action and the manifestation of power.

One striking feature of the Ojibwa notion of power is that power ideally did not have to be equal. It was considered to be balanced. The power held by one citizen did not always match that of another. What one citizen could do at one time might be unique to that person at that time. At another time, though, the distribution of power might be different. Each member of a community has different power and one cannot use that which one does not posses. As Overholt and Callicott point out,

> Indeed, in some respects it might be said that the quality of life depends on the balancing of these powers. If, for example either animals or humans act inappropriately, both will suffer....[33]

While one member of the community could have more power in a certain area and at a certain time than another, the important thing to note is that the distribution and usage of power was supposed to be ultimately balanced. In other words, while individuals could have different degrees of power in different areas at different times, every citizen still held an overall equal status in the hierarchy, or more specifically, each member had the same potential for power. No citizen was considered a priori to have more rights in general than any other citizen. Possession of power was not based on species nor was it necessarily permanent. While the balance of power could vary greatly, the basis for the holding of power was not species-dependant.

For example, in the beaver narrative, an Ojibwa hunter could not kill a beaver without balancing his use of the power with the rest of the community. The hunter would do this by returning certain body parts (and gifts) so the beaver could once again return to life. Again, the significance of this notion of power is not the obvious contradiction to Western science. What is important is the contribution to the way of

living for the Ojibwa. Notions such as these were quite "visible" in the physical aspect of the world, as well. For example, there was a constant striving to maintain balance. The so-called non-permanence of the current state of affairs implies that whatever the current status of the world is at one point, it does not always have to remain that way. All aspects of the world, both physical and non-physical, are interconnected, very similar to the upstream-downstream effect referred to in Western environmental ethics. According to this conception, every action is, on the one hand, dictated by the "upstream" effects (events which preceded it) and on the other hand will affect "downstream" affairs (events which follow). Changes for the Ojibwa are not only brought about by human intervention, but by all members of the community, which also includes other-than-human persons, or citizens.

One of the fundamental features visible in the Ojibwa view of the environment is the concept of non-ownership of "persons" in nature. This concept is derived from the Ojibwa's perception of a 'person.' The Ojibwa don't use the land from a owner-possession viewpoint but rather form the privilege of being a member of the community entire. If each and every citizen has the same inherent rights with respect to nature, then ownership (such as land or pet ownership) would have no place. Since each citizen is equal to every other citizen, owning another citizen would involve an imbalance of power and the Ojibwa world view simply does not allow for it. The Ojibwa benefit from the use of nature, but only with a common respect for the rights of all other citizens. The important distinction, though, is that the "others" in this sense refers to all "persons" in nature, and not just humans. So in essence, all persons

can have a similar benefit from all other persons, provided the rules of reciprocity are kept. The regulating force is not one posited for expedience, but rather an intrinsic respect for all persons in nature.

Traditional Ojibwa views did not recognize the idea of ownership in the same sense that the Western view does. For the Ojibwa people, the concept of ownership holds a very different meaning. For example, while individuals could own inanimate objects such as clothing, nobody could "own" a pet or any piece of land. The land did not belong to any person but rather every person was part of the land. While it was understood that Ojibwa had their territories, they did not consider the land exclusively their own. Once they moved on to a different territory, they did not defend the original territory.

The significant difference between this usage of ownership and that of Locke centres around the term 'persons'. Recall from Part I that for the Ojibwa, the notion of person was extended to include the concept of "other-than-human persons". The term person, or citizen, when used in talking about the Ojibwa tradition, refers to any living part of nature and is not limited to the domain of human persons only or even the physical domain.

The Ojibwa view themselves as an equal part of the environment, or community, and not separate from it (insofar as they claimed ownership or dominion over the environment). The Ojibwa were part of the land (a citizen of the community) and therefore had certain responsibilities--much different responsibilities from those they would have if they claimed exclusive, external ownership, such as those seen in the

writings of Jefferson and Locke, for example. This will serve as one of the foundational starting points for outlining the Ojibwa environmental ethic in the third feature of an environmental ethic. If the Ojibwa could own something exclusively, that thing could not be a person, who by definition was deserving of the same rights and respect the owner deserved. Since every living thing in nature was considered a person, there simply was not something in nature (such as a piece of land) not deserving of the same rights and respect.

The point I want to make is the concept of ownership of nature in the Ojibwa context simply does not apply. The Ojibwa's perception of the environment is a holistic one in that all of nature has the same rights, not just equal rights. For example, no one person could claim ownership of land, but every member of nature was allowed to use it, provided the rules were kept. The citizens were permitted to use the land, in the same way a hunter was permitted to kill a beaver. When a citizen benefitted from some other citizen, it was not 'use' in the same sense of the word as Western authors, such as Locke, intended it. For the Ojibwa, in order to 'use' some part of nature, there had to be reciprocity and furthermore, whatever part of nature they benefitted from had to allow itself to be used. In other words, permission was required as well.

In Western thought, property, or the right to exclusive use or disposal appears to be dependent on the perceived relationship humans have with nature. For example, Leopold talks about how men used to be able to own servant girls. These servant girls (of a lower class than the owner) were treated as nothing more than property, which

could be traded, sold or even destroyed as the owner wished. Presumably, this relationship came about, in part, because of some perceived difference between the owner and his "property", some difference that would make him better than the property, giving him a right to it. There was some form of perceived hierarchy which placed men above women, and women were perceived as property.

The same holds true for all property. Not only is the owner perceived as having a right to something, but that something at the same time has no right not be owned. This relationship is again based on how the owner is perceived in relation to that something. In other words, there exists some sort of hierarchy. In a system where no hierarchy exists, there cannot be any time where something has the right to own something else. Or more importantly, everything at all times is not subject to ownership by any other citizen. Since the Ojibwa have in their world view the element of non-hierarchy, it would only follow that for the Ojibwa, the notion of ownership of nature makes little sense. Admitting to ownership of things in nature in a non-hierarchical structure is contradictory.

It should now be evident that this notion of non-ownership is an important underpinning of the Ojibwa environmental ethic. Any accompanying duties would at least recognize that each and every part of nature was deserving of the same rights and not a separate set of obligations for possessions or land. Even without going into detail as to what the specifics of these obligations actually are, the Ojibwa environmental approach or attitude has emerged.

Hence, the human position in nature is one of equality with the rest of nature. There exists no hierarchical division between humans and any other part of nature. So the human position in the world is on the same overall level as any other 'citizen' in the entire world community. This is a community, it should be noted, which is held in a constant state of balance through complete community cooperation. There does not appear to be a different status attached to citizens just because they happen to be human. Humans are merely one class of contributors to the balance of power in nature. My intention is not to paint a utopian picture of the Ojibwa (I do not believe their system was without problems), but simply to point out the distinctive qualities of the Ojibwa's placement of humans within nature.

3) Resulting Environmental Obligations

Just as an interpretation of the "environment" is rooted in a world view, ethical implications are rooted in the understanding of what the environment is for each culture. I mentioned earlier that in the Ojibwa world view there were rules or at the very least, customs and protocols which were to be followed. The Ojibwa themselves did not lay down an actual ethic or set of rules to be followed by everyone. The rules governing actions were particular to specific situations, but they were based on a universal idea of what was expected in relation to the rest of the world.

For example, refer once again to the narrative in Part I *The Woman Who Married a Beaver*, as an example of an Ojibwa narrative. In this narrative, hunters who killed a

beaver were expected, or "required" to offer gifts such as tobacco and food. The narratives suggest interactions where the ultimate results are equal. Overholt and Callicott say,

> If men keep the rules, the deaths of the animals are not final. For practical life in the world this means that the instinct toward self-preservation, certainly observable in nature, need not be the most powerful factor influencing animal actions.[34]

The notion of life and death according to the Ojibwa is not necessarily one of absolute permanence. Animals' deaths were not considered permanent, if the rules were kept. This non-permanence of life and death sheds a different light on the idea of self-preservation. The treatment of nature was not derived from any fear for the self or from a desire for self-preservation. Certainly, a balanced interaction with nature would insure self-preservation, but if self-preservation were the sole motivation, then the end result would not be cooperation but rather a constant quest for species dominance. What better way to preserve the self than by having complete control over the other citizens?

The relationships among citizens within the entire world community are also of vital importance. Discord in the community would result if the rules governing relationships were not constantly followed. Every citizen had a right to expect proper treatment (recall the world view elements of reciprocity, the situation of blessing, and power) regardless of who that "person" was. A constant effort to maintain the relationships is required or else the entire world could alter. Recall once again the narrative *The Woman Who Married a Beaver*. If the rules were not kept, humans would no longer be able to "kill" any beavers, thereby affecting not only humans, but

possible alternatives for food and clothing. There is always the constant possibility for change, or metamorphosis. The notion of reciprocity now becomes clearer. Rules governing reciprocity are adhered to because the members involved are equally deserving of such respect. All members are persons deserving of the same respect and privileges. Because each member of the community is essentially equal, no one person can demand more overall respect or privileges than another. Clearly then, the motivation for fair and equal treatment of all of nature is brought about by mutual respect and recognition that every member of nature was an equal citizen of nature entire. It is a respect for each and every aspect of nature as being worthy of the same respect. As a result, the treatment of nature would not be just for any individually desired goal but because each and every citizen was worthy of such respect and like treatment. For example, when a hunter kills a beaver for food and clothing, the rules of reciprocity are kept not only as a benefit to the hunter, but because the beaver is worthy of such respect.

In some of the narratives Overholt and Callicott cite as examples, the animals show a reluctance to encounter humans unless there is a guarantee the rules of reciprocity will be upheld. All parties involved take steps to assure that the rules of reciprocity are met. In the event that they are not, interactions in the future might never occur. For example, in the narrative *The Woman Who Married a Beaver*, the hunters would not be able to kill a beaver if they speak poorly of a beaver. Therefore, the current world construct could alter[35], showing once again the sensitivity of the balance of power.

Obviously, there will be times when one citizen is at a more advantageous position than another, but the important point to get from this temporary 'imbalance' is in the notion of metamorphosis--no advantageous position will be permanently occupied. There is always the constant, multi-directional flow of power. For example, the Ojibwa hunter may hold a temporary privileged position over a bear. The hunter may have the means to kill a bear. This position is only temporary. According to Ojibwa thought, the bear would at some other time hold an advantageous position over the Ojibwa. How the power is used determines what happens as well as what power might be granted in the future, since power is given by other citizens of the community.

The specifics of the norms of conduct are not universal but contingent on specific situations. Examples of such situations are available in the narratives. For example, in the Narrative included in Part I, *The Woman Who Married a Beaver*, the obligations were particular to those specific circumstances but they still conformed to an overall attitude about beavers in general, as well as the world in general. The treatment of other animals may involve different obligations, different from the beavers. Even with different treatment, the attitude or motivation would remain the same.

Ojibwa Environmental Approach: An Ethic?

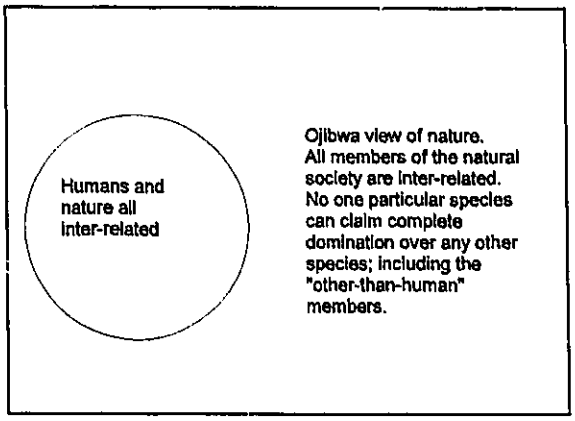

Figure 5

It should now be clear that, for the Ojibwa, the environment in which they perceive themselves living is something substantially different from that of the traditional Western European viewpoint. Consider once again the geometric representation (figure 5) of the Ojibwa view of nature. This concept of nature, and consequently of the environment, presents distinctive insights into the actual structure of nature. The structural representation itself seems to suggest a foundation for ethically based actions. Ojibwa notions such as respect, reciprocity, power, and species interaction must be viewed in the context of this arrangement: the Ojibwa perception of the world.

How the Ojibwa view the environment dictates the approach they will have towards it. Their perception of the environment outlines the basis of the Ojibwa environmental ethic. Recall that an environmental ethic will contain at least the three features discussed above. The Ojibwa environmental ethic clearly contains these elements. There is obviously some particular understanding and interpretation of the environment. The environment for the Ojibwa is a holistic world, encompassing both physical and non-physical parts of the world. It is this completely equal, holistic view

of the world which points to the human position within that world, which is on the same, non-hierarchical, level as *any* other member of the world community. Consequently, the accompanying ethical obligations are geared towards sustaining the equitable relationship between humanity and nature.

If the Ojibwa view the world as holistic, their environmental ethic could not be anything other than holistic in nature. Also, if the world view allowed for a complete unity and equality of every part of the world, it would only follow that the environmental ethic would treat *all* of nature as having equal status. It would be impossible for the world view to have no hierarchical division and the environmental ethic to have one.

By the same token, given the Ojibwa view of the world as stated, it is impossible to have a human placement in any level other than on the same hierarchical level as the rest of nature, as described by the world view. In other words, it would be impossible for the human position (as on the same level as every other part of nature) could be false given the truth of the world view. Any other interpretation would be a contradiction of the world view.

Ethical obligations are necessarily connected to both the perception of nature or the environment and the human placement within that perception. It is impossible for the human position in nature to be how the Ojibwa perceive it, with any obligations other than those involving the equitable treatment of all of nature, both physical and non-physical aspects. The fact that what the Ojibwa have to contribute can be viewed in terms of the universal features of any environmental ethic indicates that the Ojibwa

do in fact have an environmental ethic tacit in their world view. I here acknowledge one limitation of this thesis. While I believe it is apparent that the Ojibwa do have some type of environmental ethic entailed in their approach to the environment, I cannot say what that environmental ethic is all about. For example, although it is clear that certain situations entail certain rules of reciprocity, I cannot say how the Ojibwa environmental ethic would deal specifically with such issues as pollution and over population.

The third feature of any environmental ethic is obligations regarding nature. That the Ojibwa have this is now apparent. However, what the specifics are is not. With this in mind, I will now compare the Ojibwa environmental ethic, in this very generalized sense, with other environmental ethics. I believe that even though I have only shown an Ojibwa environmental ethic at a very basic structural level, there are some distinctions which set it apart from most, if not all, Western, non-native environmental ethics.

Chapter 5.

Ojibwa Environmental Ethic in Comparison: A Holistic Proposal Distinct From Western, Non-native Environmental Ethics.

I said at the beginning of this thesis that the Ojibwa contribution is distinctive and, while it shares certain commonalities with Western environmental ethics, it also adds an important dimension different from any Western environmental ethic. In Part I we saw that the world views of the Ojibwa and Western thought appear to have certain fundamental differences. It would seem reasonable to expect the interpretation the Ojibwa have of nature would also be at least somewhat different from the view of nature commonly held by Western, non-native writers of environmental ethics. As Callicott points out;

> the world view typical of American Indian peoples has included and supported an environmental ethic, while that of Europeans has encouraged human alienation from the natural environment and an exploitive practical relationship with it.[36]

I will now compare the Ojibwa environmental ethic with Western views of environmental ethics. According to Callicott, the Land Ethic put forth by Leopold is very similar to that of the Ojibwa. I mentioned earlier that Leopold might be an

exception to the Western view of ethics. I will start with Leopold's account of environmental ethics as my comparison to Western environmental ethics.

Consider what Leopold says in *A Sand County Almanac.*

> All ethics so far evolved rest upon a single premise: that the individual is a member of a community of interdependent parts. His instincts prompt him to compete for his place in that community, but his ethics prompt him also to co-operate.[37]

In his *Land Ethic*, Leopold includes soil, water, plants, animals; in essence, all of nature. At first glance, as Callicott has already pointed out, Leopold's Land Ethic appears to be similar to the Ojibwa approach. I now want to address Callicott's claim that an Ojibwa approach to the environment is, in form, the same as Aldo Leopold's. Callicott says:

> The detailed representations of the personal-social order of nature among the Ojibwa, on the one hand, and among contemporary ecologists like Aldo Leopold, on the other, are, of course, vastly different.... Nevertheless, when the mythic and scientific detail is stripped away from either, respectively, an identical abstract structure--an essentially social structure--constitutes the core conceptual pattern of the totemic natural community of the Ojibwa and the biologist's economy of nature. In form, thus, the Ojibwa land ethic and the Aldo Leopold land ethic are identical.[38]

The two approaches to a land ethic, Ojibwa and Leopold's are, in essence, from opposite directions. While both views resemble one another in some areas, they are clearly not identical, even in form.

In Leopold's approach, an existing ethical boundary is enhanced to accommodate nature. For Leopold, the ethics applicable to humans are just extended to nature. Humans are not considered deserving of any less respect, but rather nature is

considered to be deserving of more, the same amount due human beings. Leopold simply extends the boundaries to all of nature from what was originally only a human-based domain. He presents his *Land Ethic* simply as an enlarged domain of human ethics. In other words, nature is now included in the domain of human ethics.

> The land ethic simply enlarges the boundaries of the community to include soils, waters, plants, and animals, or collectively: the land.[39]

The underlying implication is that the reasons or justifications for the enlargement do not come as a result of an inherent equality but of something else. Leopold makes his claims based on the perspective of humans starting as the conquerors and adjusting themselves to become mere members of the new, enlarged community. On the contrary, it appears as if Leopold altered nature's position to share that of humans. This would naturally have to involve a surrendering of some of the power humans already would have as conqueror. More specifically, the use of such power would have to be limited from exploiter to co-operator. Leopold's Land Ethic requires us to accommodate other aspects of nature. Perhaps this accommodation could be read as making allowances for nature. It would be a step down, while still beginning with the inverted funnel-like hierarchy of nature and making subsequent amends from that perspective. Leopold says that history has shown

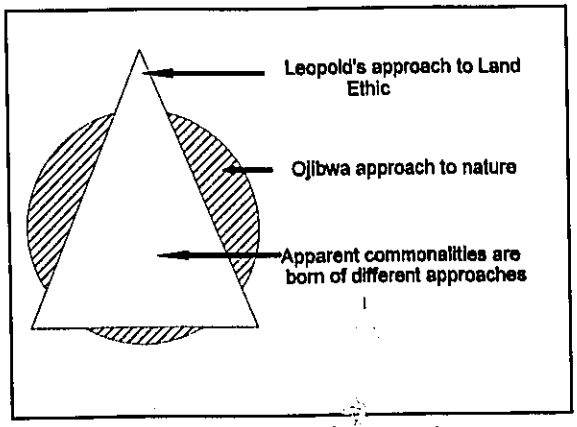

Figure 6 *Even in form, the two views are not the same.*

that the current position held by humans is self-defeating. So Leopold's ethic is a modification to an already existing human ethic to include all of nature.

Regardless of whether the ethic is called an environmental ethic or an enlargement of human ethics, the point I want to raise centres around whether or not the Land Ethic is *identical* to the Ojibwa environmental ethic as Callicott claims. In order to determine if this is the case, the "stripped down" version of each ethic ought to be compared. That means that if the foundations are the same, then obviously the two ethics could be identical, regardless of the embellishments Callicott talks about. I will discuss the various parts that are inherent in both Leopold's Land Ethic and the Ojibwa environmental ethic.

Leopold's theory includes nothing whatsoever regarding the non-physical world. This is not detrimental to Leopold's Land Ethic but it excludes one of the most fundamental elements of the Ojibwa's environmental ethic. The relationship to the non-physical world allows for concepts such as metamorphosis in a much broader sense than Leopold's theory could ever allow.

According to the Ojibwa, actions in the physical part of the world would affect happenings in the non-physical part of the world. For example, after killing a beaver, the hunters would offer gifts and place the bones in the proper place and shape. Such treatment denotes reciprocity but also a deep seated respect for nature. This respect goes beyond the physical world. The Ojibwa environmental ethic includes the non-physical aspect of the world as well as the physical. This inclusion would give rise to different treatment. For example, the Ojibwa environmental ethic would require

ethical treatment of things such as bodies of water, manitous, entities both of future as well as past. In short, the scope of the Ojibwa environmental ethic would be much larger than the scope of Leopold's. Leopold includes virtually everything the Ojibwa would in an environmental approach, but Leopold says nothing about the non-physical part of the world. The non-physical plays an important role in the treatment of the environment for the Ojibwa. Among other things, the non-physical part of the world in vital in the motivation of any environmentally-centred actions of the Ojibwa.

Where does the ethical motivation come from according to Leopold? He seems to claim that his Land ethic is an amendment to the current human position. The reason he cites is that the current human position is self-defeating. The reason he says we ought to move towards a Land ethic seems to be one of self-preservation. Even though the motive would not affect the legitimacy of Leopold's Land Ethic, it does point to the underlying hierarchical structure still evident in Leopold's ethic. What Leopold's motivation is does not affect his ethic, but it does seem to indicate that his holistic approach is not the same holistic approach as that of the Ojibwa.

The difference in hierarchical relationships points to a third difference between Leopold's Land Ethic and the Ojibwa environmental ethic. Leopold's Land Ethic in effect accommodates nature into the realm of human ethics. To accomplish this approach to an environmental ethic, some modification of human attitudes to accommodate nature is necessary. According to Leopold, the new ethic would amend the human attitude toward nature. In Western environmental ethics, the focus is

primarily on humans' attitudes and duties towards nature. In a Western view, the rest of nature does not have the same obligations (if any) in return.

According to an Ojibwa approach, all of nature (both physical and non-physical) has ethical obligations toward humans just as humans have obligations to nature. To illustrate, recall the narrative *The Orphans and the Mashos*, discussed in Part I. In this narrative, animals quite clearly acted in an ethical fashion. This ethical acting was also clearly of their own decision. As further illustration of the existence of an ethical "ought" in nature, consider the narrative *Star of the Fisher*. In this narrative, the animals take on the responsibility of rescuing the birds of summer to ensure winter does not last forever. Here, the ethical obligation involves animals dealing with the rest of nature (including other animals).[40] As further evidence, consider another Ojibwa narrative, *Now Great-Lynx*, the master of the great lynxes warned his son about not harassing the people.[41] In this narrative, the ethical obligation is on the animal as it is supposed to relate humans. For the Ojibwa, since all of nature was inter-related, ethical obligations were extended to everything, in a two-way flow. Overholt and Callicott give the example of animals' obligations not being met would relsult in harm to them possibly humans as well.[42] In other words, there appears to exist an "ought" in the Ojibwa perception of nature. Regardless of how or to what degree that ought functions, the fact remains that it exists in nature, according to the Ojibwa narratives.

The Ojibwa's holistic approach to nature is not completely dissimilar to some Western environmental ethics, but the two-way relationship of ethical obligations does seem to be a feature of the Ojibwa which is not shared by Western thought. For

example, Westra's principle of Integrity, like Leopold's Land Ethic, does not share this feature with the Ojibwa approach. Her approach does seem to be much more similar to the Ojibwa approach. The Principle of Integrity would allow for ethical treatment of bodies of water, for example. However, I believe that what sets the Ojibwa approach apart from the Western environmental ethics is the two way flow of ethical obligations. Pristine wilderness and buffer zones are a human responsibility, according to the Principle of Integrity.

Not only is this difference in ethical obligations visible with Leopold and Westra, but I believe this third difference is the added dimension which sets Western environmental attitudes apart from the Ojibwa. Of course, this difference does not imply that one is better than the other, only that the Ojibwa environmental ethic cannot be counted as identical to any Western, non-Native environmental ethic. Leopold's environmental ethic is not completely different from other Western environmental ethics. Leopold's approach requires actions stemming from human beings and it stops there. This representation still seems to place humans on a different level hierarchically than the rest of nature. The top-down representation of hierarchy still appears to play some role, even though that role may have been diminished.

The Ojibwa approach recognizes no descending triangular hierarchical representation of nature and humans at all. The Ojibwa view themselves as equal with nature, inherently. The difference is that they do not make themselves (or nature) equal out of self-preservation, but recognize that they are equal, a priori. And as such, the Ojibwa have certain obligations owed to them from different aspects of nature (if

the rules are kept). In the Ojibwa environmental ethic, obligations are not just those owed to nature by humans, but also to humans (as any other part of nature) by any other part of nature.

This principal difference denies any possibility that the Ojibwa approach and the Leopold land ethic are the same. Leopold's ethic still has the potential for a one way, downward flow of power from humans to the rest of nature. Admittedly, he has lessened the severity of the hierarchical distinction, but he has not eliminated it altogether. This is not surprising if we consider again the Western world view and what Callicott said. To repeat,

> the world view typical of American Indian peoples has included and supported an environmental ethic, while that of Europeans has encouraged human alienation from the natural environment and an exploitive practical relationship with it.[43]

Any environmental ethic must be based in the perception of nature and the human position within that view. The Ojibwa environmental ethic seems to suggest a necessary unity with all of nature.

It is here, the overall unity of nature, where the Ojibwas' greatest contribution to environmental wisdom may be found. The Ojibwa way of life embraces a complete interconnectedness with nature, necessarily. Concepts such as "ecological awareness" and similar terms all point to one thing that is definitely not Ojibwa: a perspective of the environment which places humans apart from the environment. This perspective places the perceiver (humans) apart from the perceived (nature). To view the Ojibwa approach to land ethics in this manner is contradictory to what the Ojibwa world view

would actually dictate. The Ojibwa perspective is intrinsic to their perceived position in the world. Quite simply, to view humans as separate from nature just does not make any sense according to the Ojibwa world view. Such a perspective is a Western, non-native one. All of the above terms denote a particular approach *to* the environment and not necessarily *with* the environment. However, as Overholt and Callicott point out, applying Ojibwa ideas to Western thought does not mean that nothing can be gained. It is important to keep in mind that certain Ojibwa mind-sets will not agree (or make any sense at all) with Western mind-sets and vice versa.

A recurring theme in the Ojibwa environmental ethic is the constant potential for change. Each "person," human or other-than-human, would be worthy of the same amount of respect. It is this notion of respect which lies at the heart of the Ojibwa environmental approach. Regarding an Ojibwa interpretation of the environment Overholt and Callicott write:

> While in the Western world view only human beings are fully persons, the Ojibwa acknowledge other-than-human persons, among them "plants and animals" and even "soils and waters," as Leopold's criterion requires.... The narratives represent human and other-than-human persons as bound together in a system of distinctly social relations....Human beings must assume appropriate attitudes toward the non-human members of their polymorphous community... non-human beings must be *respected*. The Ojibwa complex of attitudes and behavioral rules in relation to non-human beings deserves, therefore, to be called an environmental *ethic*.[44]

It is the notion of respect and how it works which best illustrates the difference between Paul Taylor's environmental ethic and that of the Ojibwa. As I mentioned earlier, Taylor's approach is an individualistic one. The Ojibwa narratives do suggest

a one-on-one approach to nature in that each animal was to be treated in a certain fashion, for example the beavers were to be given gifts after they were killed. However, the Ojibwa approach is better described as a holistic one. The individual approach to animals the Ojibwa seem to follow also points to a greater, overall ethic encompassing all animals. In fact, all of nature, indicative of a holistic environmental ethic.

The most apparent difference between Taylor's approach and the Ojibwa environmental ethic lies in how they view the connection between humans and nature. Taylor's "life-centred" approach to the environment has many similarities to the Ojibwa environmental ethic. His use of "respect" has some similarities to the Ojibwa's notion of "respect" for the environment.

It is this notion of respect which is distinctive of the Ojibwa environmental ethic. Their attitude regarding the environment has all the basic foundational criteria for an environmental ethic; namely all aspects of nature are considered persons, they enter into social relations with humans, and all are bound by the same conventionalized rules of behaviour.[45]

The significance of these "rules" governing behaviour in nature is important. For example, according to the Ojibwa, the balance of power would not be for the sole benefit of each individual but rather for the environment as an end in itself. Environmental concerns, such as the concern about the needless wasting of resources, would not be based in ecological awareness as something *apart* from nature (that is, human-centred), but instead, founded in respect for nature as being an end in itself; as

deserving of such respect since it would be on the same level as all "equal" members of the society. Furthermore, humans would still be an interdependent part of the whole: all of nature.

Even though the Ojibwa environmental ethic appears similar to at least part of many Western, non-native environmental ethics, it has important fundamental differences which set it apart from them. There are some obvious overlaps with non-Native environmental approaches, but the Ojibwa environmental ethic adds an important dimension to the study of environmental ethics.

ENDNOTES, PART II

1. Paul Taylor, *Respect For Nature*, (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1986). pp. 12-3.

2. Taylor, *Respect For Nature*, pp. 99-100.

3. Taylor, *Respect For Nature*, p. 46.

4. Taylor, *Respect For Nature*, p. 75.

5. Taylor, *People, Penguins and Plastic Trees*, p.183.

6. Laura Westra, *An Environmental Proposal for Ethics: The Principle of Integrity*. (Lanham, Maryland: Rowan and Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 1994).

7. Westra, *The Principle of Integrity*, p.92.

8. Westra, *The Principle of Integrity*, p.123.

9. Westra, *The Principle of Integrity*, p.44.

10. Westra, *The Principle of Integrity*, p.49.

11. Westra, *The Principle of Integrity*, p.25.

12. Westra, *The Principle of Integrity*, p.123.

13. Aldo Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac*, (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1949). p.204.

14. Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac*, p.203.

15. Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac*, p.204.

16. Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac*, p. 210.

17. Callicott, *In Defense Of The Land Ethic*, p.192.

18. *The Oxford Dictionary of Current English*, R.E. Allen, editor, (Toronto: Oxford University 1984). p.245.

19. Max Oelschlaeger, *The Idea of Wilderness*, (Binghamton, New York: Vail-Ballou Press, 1991). p.133.

20. Oelschlaeger, *The Idea Of Wilderness*, p.1.

21. Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac*, p.204.

22. Oelschlaeger, *The Idea of Wilderness*, p.129.

23. John Locke, "Second Treatise on Government", *The English Philosophers From Bacon to Mill*, Edwin A. Burtt, editor. (New York: Random House, 1939). Chapter V, par. 26-7.

24. Mark Sagoff, "Takings, Just Compensation, and the Environment," *Upstream/Downstream: Issues in Environmental Ethics*, (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1990). p.60.

25. Sagoff, "Takings, Just Compensation, and the Environment," pp. 161-2.

26. Peter Singer, "Animal Liberation", *People, Penguins, and Plastic Trees*, p.25.

27. Sagoff, "Takings, Just Compensation, and the Environment", p.174.

28. Callicott, *In Defense of the Land Ethic.*, pp. 80-1.

29. Callicott, *In Defense Of the Land Ethic*, p.188.

30. Overholt and Callicott, *Clothed-In-Fur And Other Tales*, pp.140-9.

31. Overholt and Callicott, *Clothed-In-Fur and Other Tales*, pp. 142-3. Overholt and Callicott refer to the mythic world where the narratives take place. It appears as if the mythic world is incorporated within the non-physical aspect of the world. I refer only to the non-physical aspect of the world for my purposes. The mythic world could be seen as that aspect of the entire world where the narratives take place. However, the lessons an non-permanence is seen in the non-physical as well as the physical. The mythic part could be seen as a part of the non-physical aspect of the world. For the sake of simplicity, I will use only the term "non-physical" to denote that entire world, including the mythic part.

32. For an example of this, see "The Woman Who Married A Beaver" in Overholt's and Callicott's *Clothed-In-Fur And Other Tales*, pp.74-5.

33. Overholt and Callicott, *Clothed-In-Fur and Other Tales*, p.141.

34. Overholt and Callicott, *Clothed-In-Fur and Other Tales*, p.147.

35. Overholt and Callicott, *Clothed-In-Fur and Other Tales*, p. 139 ff.

36. Callicott, *In Defense of the Land Ethic*, p.177.

37. Aldo Leopold, *A Sand Country Almanac*, pp. 204-5.

38. Callicott, *In Defense of the Land Ethic*, p.215.

39. Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac*, p.204.

40. Overholt and Callicott, *Clothed-In-Fur and Other Tales*, "Star of The Fisher," pp. 99-104.

41. Overholt and Callicott, *Clothed-In-Fur and Other Tales*, "Now Great-Lynx," pp. 87-8.

42. Overholt and Callicott, *Clothed-In-Fur and Other Tales*, p.141.

43. Callicott, *In Defense of the Land Ethic*, p.177.

44. Overholt and Callicott, *Clothed-In-Fur and Other Tales*, pp.154-5.

45. These are common elements readily extracted from the narratives. Overholt and Callicott point this out in *Clothed-In-Fur and Other Tales*, on p.155.

Summary.

Overholt and Callicott's approach to an Ojibwa world view using narratives extracted at least eight world view elements of the Ojibwa. These eight elements outlined in Part I, combined with predominant themes in the Ojibwa narratives yielded the additional Ojibwa world view element of non-hierarchy. The structure of Western, non-native environmental ethics showed us that there are three fundamental features necessary to any environmental ethic. I used the Ojibwa world view elements discussed in Part I to determine whether or not the Ojibwa have something to contribute with respect to the three features. Furthermore, by comparing the Ojibwa approach to the environment to some Western, non-native environmental ethic, I showed that what the Ojibwa have to contribute is, in some important ways, distinctive from the Western approach.

At the outset of this thesis, I said that I would determine if the Ojibwa did in fact have an environmental ethic. I have demonstrated that the Ojibwa do in fact have an environmental ethic to contribute to the discipline. However, I can claim only that what the Ojibwa have appears to fit the pattern of an environmental ethic. There clearly exists the notion of right and wrong actions regarding nature, but I cannot say

what they are. I cannot say exactly what this ethic entails where specific actions are concerned. Unlike many Western approaches, such as Westra's Principle of Integrity, the Ojibwa environmental ethic as I discuss it does not clearly show any specific plan for action. For example, the Ojibwa approach as I state it would not readily give us any solutions to air pollution. I want to point out that this limitation is not of the Ojibwa environmental ethic but rather of the limited scope of my thesis.

It was shown that the derivation of an Ojibwa environmental ethic from an Ojibwa world view will yield at least a general description of this ethic. The nature of my derivation leaves no room for doubt that if the world view elements are accurate, then the generalized Ojibwa environmental ethic is as I described it. I did not find any reason to doubt the elements of the Ojibwa world view as outlined by Overholt and Callicott, and so I accept them at face value.

I have merely scratched the surface regarding Ojibwa contributions to philosophy, let alone any other discipline. If an environmental ethic can be accurately derived from the world view, what else might that same world view shed some light on? The complete investigation into an Ojibwa world view alone is an incredibly large undertaking; an undertaking which simply could not be finished in this thesis.

Having said that, I would like to repeat what I said at the outset. Now that the initial investigation into an Ojibwa world view and the Ojibwa approach to the environment is started, consider the different world views of the Ojibwa and of those who created *The Indian Act*, as well as other dealings with Native peoples living in Canada. Can the differences be accommodated by one simple Act? How would the

Ojibwa (and for that matter, any other Native North American) approach issues such as education, justice, social welfare systems? In fact, is it even possible to combine the Ojibwa world view with that of even a generalized non-native Canadian one (it would be even more difficult with more than one Canadian non-native world view)? There are many other questions of this nature which could be raised.

One thing is certain, and that is the Ojibwa have something distinctive to contribute to philosophy as well as to other disciplines. Throughout the thesis I referred to Ojibwa views and approaches to the environment. I did so to show that what I was attempting to do was explore the foundations, or structures, of the Ojibwa viewpoints. It is a different and larger task to explore in greater detail what the Ojibwa environmental ethic or even their world view, would involve in complete detail. I feel that even a basic account as I have given is an important step in recognizing any sort of environmental ethic. The Ojibwa approach to the environment clearly shows there is a particular environmental ethic to be learned. The structural basis has been laid down. Any determination as to the actual specifics of the Ojibwa environmental ethic can be accomplished by way of the structure set out above.

In addition to limited space available in my thesis, I acknowledge the very important fact that the insights gleaned about the Ojibwa culture are almost exclusively from the narratives. I believe that the narratives do in fact provide a sound basis for uncovering the Ojibwa world view and even for supporting any environmental views. To explore these insights in more detail (and countless other contributions the Ojibwa

undoubtedly have made), it would be necessary to explore other aspects of the Ojibwa culture as well, and not just the narratives alone.

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